

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5239

As Passed House
April 24, 1993

Title: An act relating to poison information centers.

Brief Description: Centralizing poison information services.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wojahn, Prentice, Moyer, Deccio, Talmadge, Hargrove, Winsley, West and Erwin).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Health Care, March 26, 1993, DP;
Passed House, April 24, 1993, 92-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members:
Representatives Dellwo, Chair; L. Johnson, Vice Chair; Dyer,
Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Campbell; Conway; Cooke;
Flemming; R. Johnson; Lisk; Mastin; Morris; Thibaudeau; and
Veloria.

Staff: Bill Hagens (786-7131).

Background: State law requires the Department of Health (DOH) to support a statewide program of poison and drug information services. The program is conducted through poison and drug information centers in Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma and Yakima. The centers, which are located in hospitals, provide emergency telephone assistance and treatment referral to victims of poison accidents and accidental exposures to toxic materials. They assess the patient, research the toxicity and exposure, determine appropriate management of the exposure situation, and provide treatment. The call volume to the centers exceeded 130,000 in 1992.

The state currently finances approximately 33 percent of the four centers' operating expenses -- \$1,800,000 in the 91-93 biennium. The remaining amount comes from the host hospitals through in-kind contributions. The host hospitals have indicated that they are unable to continue to subsidize the program. In response, the Legislature directed the DOH

to propose a plan of consolidation of the four centers into one center so that financial efficiencies could be obtained.

Summary of Bill: Legislative intent is clarified to emphasize the value of poison and toxic information centers in reducing health care costs by facilitating early intervention and treatment. The secretary of the Department of Health (DOH) is required to consolidate the four existing poison and toxic information centers into one no later than June 30, 1993. The secretary is to decide the location of the consolidated center.

The responsibilities of the center are clarified and expanded. They include improving providing 24-hour emergency phone service, awareness of poison and overdose problems, occupation risks and environmental exposures and coordinating outreach units whose functions are to educate the public on poison and toxic exposure issues.

DOH is required to develop a system for consultation and coordination with other state and local agencies involved in poison and toxic issues. The center is authorized to receive gifts, grants and endowments. A redundant section of the law concerning the powers and duties of the centers is repealed.

The bill is made contingent on funding being provided by June 30, 1993.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The Poison Information Program saves lives and reduces medical costs by facilitating early medical intervention. Consolidation of poison information centers will reduce overall costs to the program. New funding sources need to be identified in order to assure continuation of the program.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Senator Wojahn, prime sponsor; Janet Griffith, Department of Health (pro); Susie Tracy, Washington State Medical Association & Poison Center Network (pro); and Robb Menaul, Washington State Hospital Association (pro).