

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SB 5857**

**AS OF MARCH 1, 1993**

**Brief Description:** Requiring food service establishments and food handlers to meet specific public health standards.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Cantu, Roach, Moyer and Winsley

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

**Staff:** Scott Plack (786-7409)

**Hearing Dates:** March 2, 1993

**BACKGROUND:**

The annual estimates of acute food-borne illness incidents in Washington range from 250,000 to 1.5 million according to the state Department of Health. The overwhelming majority of these illnesses occur at home and go unreported. The major cause of foodborne illness is faulty food preparation: leaving potentially hazardous food unrefrigerated too long; improper cooking of meat, poultry and fish and improper washing of hands, utensils, and cutting boards. About 90 percent of these illnesses are preventable.

There are a wide range of diseases that can be contracted from contaminated or mishandled food. They include gastroenteric disease (e.g., salmonellosis, giardiasis), hepatitis-A, E. coli, botulism, a variety of intestinal diseases and other diseases and illnesses. The elderly, young and people with compromised immune systems (as a result of AIDS, chemotherapy, or organ transplants) are at a much higher risk from food borne illnesses.

Hepatitis-B is found in bodily fluids and secretions. It is transmitted through sexual contact involving exposure to infected bodily secretions, exposure to infected blood and from maternal-infant contact during pregnancy and childbirth. Tuberculosis (TB) infection typically results from prolonged exposure to airborne bacteria produced by an individual with an active disease case. The most vulnerable populations include those with HIV infection and other forms of immunosuppression, diabetics, underweight and undernourished persons and injection drug users.

The state Board of Health has adopted standards for food handling and preparation, including a variety of procedures to minimize hand contact with food by food service workers. The Department of Health and local health officers are responsible for enforcement of the standards. Food and beverage workers are also required by the board to complete an examination conducted by the local health officers that demonstrates their

knowledge of elementary acceptable practices on sanitary food preparation, service, storage and proper use of equipment and facilities used in food preparation and storage.

A lack of knowledge about proper food handling practices and sanitation by persons who prepare and handle food is the primary barrier to effective action. Activities that promote increased awareness of safe food handling and preparation could substantially reduce foodborne illnesses.

**SUMMARY:**

Owners or supervisors of food service establishments must maintain an adequate supply of single-service food service gloves. The state Board of Health is directed to adopt rules concerning required use of single-service gloves by persons handling food in food service establishments. Food service establishment owners and food and beverage service workers are required to comply with the board rules.

All persons applying for a first time food handler permit, food and beverage service workers' permit or other such permits must be tested for hepatitis A and B and tuberculosis before such permits are issued. An individual allowing his or her permit to lapse will be treated as a first time applicant for the purposes of requiring testing. The local health officer shall furnish to applicants for a permit, or those renewing a permit, a copy of the latest edition of the food and beverage service workers' manual as prepared by the Department of Health. Persons applying for or renewing a permit shall complete an examination conducted by the local health officer on subjects related to the sanitary preparation, service, and storage of food and beverages and the proper sanitation of equipment and facilities.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** requested