

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5322

As Reported By House Committee On:
Health Care

Title: An act relating to removing regulatory barriers to the provision of oral health care services to rural, remote, and underserved populations.

Brief Description: Removing regulatory barriers to the provision of oral health care services to rural, remote, and underserved populations.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Deccio, Thibaudeau and Kohl).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 3/28/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Dyer, Chairman; Backlund, Vice Chairman; Cody, Ranking Minority Member; Murray, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson; Conway; Parlette; Sherstad; Wood and Zellinsky.

Staff: John Welsh (786-7133).

Background: Currently, dental hygienists perform duties within their scope of practice under the supervision of a dentist. Current statutory restrictions prohibit more than two dental hygienists from practicing under the supervision of one dentist.

By law, dental hygienists may perform specific duties without dental supervision in specified health care facilities. One of the facilities is public health facilities. There is a question whether community and migrant health centers and tribal health centers are considered to be public health facilities.

Dental hygienists who come to Washington State from another state may receive a temporary license for 18 months without taking an examination while they fulfill additional requirements of licensure. This temporary licensure program will terminate on January 1, 1998.

Summary of Bill: The current ratio of dentists to dental hygienists is repealed.

Dental hygienists may practice without dental supervision in state or federally-funded community and migrant health centers, and tribal clinics.

The January 1, 1998, termination date for the dental hygienist temporary licensure program is repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: These changes provide greater flexibility to dental hygienists for accessing patients in underserved areas of the state, as their availability is not tied to the number of dentists. Dental hygienists can practice in more rural facilities. Dental hygienists in other states may continue to migrate here to qualify for state licensure, thus improving access to rural populations.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Dr. David Petersen, Dr. Mary Smith and Dr. Richard Grubb, Washington State Dental Association (pro); Jeff Larsen, Washington State Dental Hygienists Association (pro); and Jeanne Ward, Department of Social & Health Services (pro).