

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1618

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 27, 1998

Title: An act relating to treatment programs for impaired physicians.

Brief Description: Modifying certain aspects of programs that treat impaired physicians.

Sponsors: House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Skinner, Dyer, Conway, Zellinsky, Cody, Backlund, Parlette and Clements).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/27/98 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Benton, Franklin, Strannigan and Wojahn.

Staff: Joan K. Mell (786-7447)

Background: The Impaired Physician Program is a program under contract with the Medical Quality Assurance Commission to assist physicians impaired as a result of alcoholism, drug abuse, mental illness, or other debilitating conditions. This program also includes by contract the participation of other health care professionals.

The Impaired Physician Program is funded by an annual surcharge on physician licenses that is deposited in the Department of Health's Health Professions Account for use solely for the program. No surcharge is taken from the licenses of physician assistants or osteopathic physician assistants.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Legislature intends the Impaired Physician Program be fully funded from license surcharges.

Physician assistants, in addition to physicians, are now charged a \$25 annual surcharge to pay for the program. The surcharges are deposited into an impaired physician account. The account is non-appropriated. Other health care practitioners can by contract obtain impaired physician services, and surcharges may be taken from their annual licensing fee.

The Impaired Physician Program, its officers, agents, and employees are immune from civil liability.

An impairment is redefined to require an inability to practice medicine with reasonable skill and safety because of substance abuse.

The Impaired Physician Program has reporting requirements to the department, and is authorized to receive and act on complaints of impairment.

Language changes are made to reflect current practices. Technical corrections are made.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: The osteopathic and medical physicians' assistants statutes concerning fees are amended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Physician assistants and osteopathic physician assistants can participate in impaired physician programs. The program pays for itself from license surcharges. The money would be deposited into an impaired physicians account, rather than the health professions account.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Skinner; Carl Nelson.