

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5715

As Passed Senate, March 17, 1997

Title: An act relating to orthotic and prosthetic services.

Brief Description: Licensing orthotists and prosthetists.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Wood, Fairley, Franklin, Deccio and Winsley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/21/97, 2/28/97 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 3/17/97, 47-1.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5232 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Rhoda Jones (786-7198)

Background: Orthotists design, fabricate, and fit braces and other supportive devices for patients who have injuries or diseases which interfere with normal body functions. Prosthetists make and fit artificial limbs for patients who have lost their own due to injury or disease.

Currently, there is no state regulation of these professions. There are an estimated 94 privately certified orthotists and prosthetists in the state, 44 of whom are members of the Washington Orthotic and Prosthetic Association, and 87 are certified by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics. These private certifications require minimum training, approved competency testing and an approved amount of continuing education.

Orthotic and prosthetic practitioners are primarily self-employed or employed in small private practices. Orthotic and prosthetic devices are prescribed by a referring authorized health care practitioner, although there is currently no legal requirement for a prescription.

A sunrise review was conducted on a proposal to license orthotists and prosthetists. The recommendation called for these professions to be licensed.

Summary of Bill: Orthotists and prosthetists are regulated at the level of licensure. These practitioners may only provide treatment using a new orthoses or prostheses under an order from an authorized health care practitioner. These practitioners are defined in statute.

The Secretary of Health has the authority to administer rules, determine minimum education requirements, evaluate education programs, set fees, and adopt rules implementing continuing competency requirements.

The Secretary of Health is also given authority to appoint an advisory committee composed of five members: three practitioners regulated under this act, one physician, and two public members.

Requirements for application for licensure are defined. They include a baccalaureate degree with appropriate course work, other formal training, a clinical internship and passing an exam.

Orthotists and prosthetists licensed under this act are regulated under the Uniform Disciplinary Act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 17, 1997.

Effective Date: Multiple effective dates; see text of bill.

Testimony For: A sunrise review was conducted on the proposal to license these professionals and the recommendation was to license. There is a serious issue of health and safety because people who need artificial replacements for parts of their body are totally dependent on a proper fit. These devices require highly trained professionals to do the job right. Poorly designed prostheses can cause injury.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Steve Boruchowitz, DOH; Lori Stephens, Washington Occupational Therapy Association; Brian Williams, Jan Thompson, Bernard Hewey, WOPA; Jeannie Groman; Patty Bates; Elizabeth Spencer Steffa, Occupational Therapy (neutral).

House Amendment(s): Clarification is added to alternative standards for licensing. Other technical changes are made.