

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 6545

FULL VETO

As Passed Legislature

Brief Description: Providing full funding for the impaired physician program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Wood, Wojahn, Rasmussen, Benton, Fairley, Strannigan and Hale).

Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care

House Committee on Health Care

Background: The Department of Health collects up to \$25 from a physician's annual licensing fee to fund an impaired physician program. The impaired physician program helps physicians and physician assistants with substance abuse and mental illness. The funds are deposited into a health professions account, which is subject to legislative appropriation. The present statute requires that the surcharge must be used solely for the implementation of the impaired physician program.

Summary: An annual surcharge on licensing fees for physicians and physician assistants must be deposited into a new nonappropriated account designated the impaired physician account. As a special nonappropriated account, all of the funds in the account may be spent without appropriation from the Legislature. The surcharge amount is \$25. Other health care providers may contract with the impaired physician program.

The impaired physician program has statutory immunity for its activities.

The physician licensing commission is authorized to contract for up to six years with an entity to provide impaired physician programs.

The term impaired- is redefined to require that a condition cause an inability to practice medicine with reasonable skill and safety to patients.

The scope of the impaired physician program is broadened to include treatment and assessment of reports of suspected impairment.

Impaired practitioner programs and voluntary substance abuse monitoring programs must report suspected or verified impairment to the physician licensing commission, as well as accept complaints of suspected or verified impairment.

The impaired physician program is given authority to select treatment programs for its patients.

There is a provision encouraging courts to sanction persons alleging impairment in bad faith and without reasonable grounds.

Votes on Final Passage:

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| Senate | 46 | 0 |
| House | 94 | 3 |