

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6172

As Passed Senate, February 9, 2000

Title: An act relating to bone marrow donation.

Brief Description: Allowing minors to donate bone marrow.

Sponsors: Senators Fraser, Deccio, Thibaudeau, Prentice, T. Sheldon, Kohl-Welles, Fairley, McAuliffe and Oke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/17/2000, 1/27/2000 [DP].
Passed Senate, 2/9/2000, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Thibaudeau, Chair; Wojahn, Vice Chair; Costa, Deccio, Franklin and Winsley.

Staff: Joan K. Mell (786-7447)

Background: The National Marrow Donor Program does not permit testing people under the age of 18 to determine compatibility for bone marrow donation. The reason cited has been that minors are not competent to provide informed consent to the medical procedures. The age and maturity of the minor have not been sufficient exceptions to the policy, despite the fact that teenage minors can consent to certain kinds of medical care.

Attention was focused on this policy by the media when North Thurston High School sophomore Alden Tucker was refused testing to see if he was a bone marrow match for his friend Michael Penon. Through private efforts, testing was finally performed, but he was not a match. Michael Penon ultimately died of complications of leukemia.

Alden Tucker has not been listed on the national registry despite a recognized need for increased minority representation on the registry. The National Marrow Donor Program indicates that most minorities who search the Registry, with its current donor pool, are less likely to find a marrow match than Caucasians. Some estimate nearly a 40 percent difference.

Summary of Bill: A person's status as a minor cannot disqualify him or her from bone marrow donation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: There is a substantial need to increase the availability of bone marrow, particularly for minorities. Testing for compatibility poses little risk to the individual. Even youth should have an opportunity to save the life of another.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Lora Cooper; Leo Guzman; Angela Guzman-Tucker; Alden Tucker; Tommy Tucker; Rob Hill, Morgan Hill Law Firm; Leopold Guzman.