

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6020

As Passed House:

April 10, 2001

Title: An act relating to access to dental care.

Brief Description: Establishing a school sealant endorsement program for dental hygienists.

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

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 3/23/01, 3/27/01 [DP];
Appropriations: 3/29/01, 3/31/01 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 4/10/01, 94-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the Department of Health to establish a school sealant endorsement program for dental hygienists and dental assistants serving low-income, rural, at-risk children in school-based sealant programs.
- Upon endorsement, a dental hygienist without dental supervision, and a dental assistant under general dental supervision may assess and apply sealants and fluoride varnishes to children in school-based sealant programs. However, no endorsement is required for dental hygienists currently licensed, and dental assistants currently working under dental supervision.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Campbell, Republican Co-Chair; Cody, Democratic Co-Chair; Schual-Berke, Democratic Vice Chair; Skinner, Republican Vice Chair; Alexander, Ballasiotes, Conway, Darneille, Edmonds, Edwards, Marine, McMorris, Pennington and Ruderman.

Staff: John Welsh (786-7133).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 29 members: Representatives Sehlin, Republican Co-Chair; H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Barlean, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; Lisk, Republican Vice Chair; Alexander, Benson, Boldt, Buck, Clements, Cody, Cox, Dunshee, Fromhold, Grant, Kagi, Keiser, Kenney, Kessler, Lambert, Linville, Mastin, McIntire, Pearson, Pflug, Ruderman, D. Schmidt, Schual-Berke and Talcott.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Mulliken.

Staff: Amy Hanson (786-7118).

Background:

A recent oral health survey conducted by the Department of Health found that among second grade children, dental problems have worsened in the last five years. In 1995 when the department conducted its first oral health survey, 6 percent of the children with decay were not being treated. Parents of Head Start kids named dental problems as their number one health concern. Studies have found that children with sealants experience one fourth of the decay of those who do not have sealants, when they are applied properly.

Under current law, dental hygienists can apply sealants only under the general supervision of a licensed dentist.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature finds that access to preventive and restorative oral health services are restricted and that children are unnecessarily suffering from dental disease. The Legislature intends to address the problem of poor access to low-income children by providing for school-based sealant programs.

The secretary of the Department of Health is authorized to establish a school sealant endorsement program for dental hygienists and dental assistants serving low income, rural, and at-risk children in school based sealant programs.

A dental hygienist licensed as of the effective date of this act may assess for and apply sealants, and apply fluoride varnishes to low-income children in school sealant programs without an endorsement. A dental hygienist licensed after the effective date of this act must obtain an endorsement.

A dental assistant who has worked under the supervision of a licensed dentist for at least

200 hours may apply for endorsement by the department to apply sealants and fluoride varnishes to low-income, rural, and at-risk children in school sealant programs. Dental assistants practicing as of the effective date of this act may apply sealants in school programs under the general supervision of a dentist without an endorsement.

The department shall report to the Legislature by December 1, 2005, with an evaluation of the school sealant program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: (Health Care) The school-based sealant program will improve access of low-income children to oral health services. Dental hygienists and dental assistants can provide sealants in the absence of dentists, which are in critical supply especially in rural areas.

Testimony For: (Appropriations) The Washington State Dental Association and the Dental Hygienists' Association support this legislation. The objective of this bill is to reduce dental disease. A little bit of an expenditure here should actually save money in the long run. Sealants help dental decay from occurring and progressing further.

Testimony Against: (Health Care) None.

Testimony Against: (Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Health Care) Senator Deccio, prime sponsor; Melissa Johnson and Carolyn Robertson, Washington State Dental Hygienists' Association; Dave Michener, Washington State Dental Association; and Norma Wells, University of Washington Dental Hygiene.

Testified: (Appropriations) Linda Hall, Washington Dental Association; and Melissa Johnson, Washington State Dental Hygienists' Association.