

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6537

As Passed House:

March 6, 2002

Title: An act relating to emergency care for victims of sexual assault.

Brief Description: Providing emergency contraception to sexual assault victims.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Costa, Winsley, Kohl-Welles, Thibaudeau, Fairley, Kline, Jacobsen, Prentice, B. Sheldon and Keiser).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 2/25/02 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/02, 75-19.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Hospitals are required to provide victims of sexual assault with information about emergency contraception, inform them of their option to receive it, and if not contraindicated, immediately provide it, if requested.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Schual-Berke, Vice Chair; Campbell, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Conway, Darneille, Edwards, Ruderman and Skinner.

Staff: Dave Knutson (786-7146).

Background:

When victims of sexual assault are treated in hospital emergency rooms, there is no requirement that they be notified of the availability of emergency contraception. There is also no statutory requirement that hospitals provide emergency contraception, if requested by the victim of a sexual assault.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Every hospital providing emergency care to a victim of sexual assault is required to inform the person about emergency contraception, and their right to receive it. Unless it is contraindicated, the hospital is required to provide emergency contraception, if requested by the victim of a sexual assault. The secretary of the Department of Health is required to develop informational material on emergency contraception and disseminate it to every emergency room in the state. The Department of Health is required to respond to complaints of violations of the statute related to the use of emergency contraception. The Department of Health will establish an advisory committee to monitor compliance with the statutory requirements related to the use of emergency contraception.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Victims of sexual assault should have access to emergency contraception when they are treated in hospital emergency rooms.

Testimony Against: This bill disrespects life and will encourage abortion. Catholic hospitals should not be forced to provide services they are opposed to on moral grounds.

Testified: (In support) Senator Costa, prime sponsor; and Suzanne Brown, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs.

(Concerns) Kevin Glacken-Coley, Washington State Catholic Conference; and Theresa Tavernero, Franciscan Health System.

(Oppose) Julie Whitson, Concerned Women of America of Washington.