

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5039

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As of February 2, 2001

**Title:** An act relating to the endorsement of school sealant endorsed dental hygienists.

**Brief Description:** Allowing endorsed dental hygienists to provide sealants to low-income school children.

**Sponsors:** Senators Thibaudeau, Deccio, Kohl-Welles, Prentice and Costa.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 2/5/01.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Staff:** Rhoda Donkin (786-7198)

**Background:** A recent oral health survey conducted by the Department of Health found that among second grade children in the state, dental problems have worsened in the last five years. In 1995, when the department conducted its first survey, 46 percent of the children surveyed had experienced tooth decay. In 2000, this grew to 55 percent. The survey showed that among Head Start children, more than half the children with decay were not being treated. Parents of Head Start children 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 don't have sealants, when they are applied properly. Under current practice, dental hygienists can apply sealants only under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist.

**Summary of Bill:** A licensed dental hygienist may apply for endorsement by the Department of Health (DOH) to apply sealants for low- income, rural, and at-risk children in school-based programs without the direct supervision of a dentist. Hygienists receive this endorsement following completion of Washington State sealant guidelines and training as developed or approved by DOH. School sealant programs using endorsed hygienists must coordinate with local public health and oral health coalitions. DOH is directed to report back to the Legislature on the impact of granting school sealant endorsements to dental hygienists by December 1, 2005.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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