

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6666

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 6, 2002

Title: An act relating to payment for nursing care services.

Brief Description: Modifying payment amounts for nursing care services.

Sponsors: Senators Costa, Deccio and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/4/02, 2/6/02 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Thibaudeau, Chair; Costa, Deccio, Fraser and Winsley.

Staff: Rhoda Donkin (786-7198)

Background: Nursing pools provide temporary health care personnel to health care facilities including hospitals and long-term care facilities. Nursing pools are registered with the Department of Health and must verify that each temporary employee or independent contractor meets the applicable minimum state credentialing requirements and has had a criminal background check.

Health care facilities use nursing pools when they are short-staffed, especially for night shifts and holidays. Facilities report that their reliance on nursing pools has grown in recent years, as the shortage of health care workers has worsened. Nursing pools charge facilities at several times the rate of permanent employees.

Summary of Bill: Nursing pools may not bill health care facilities more than 135 percent of the county weighted average wage rate for nursing facility employees. This rate is calculated based on nursing home wages in like job classifications and the number of people in them in the county where the nursing facility is located. The maximum rate must include all charges for administrative fees and other special charges in addition to the hourly rates for the nursing pool employees.

State nursing facility reimbursement must recognize nursing pool charges.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: New fiscal note requested on January 25, 2002.

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

Testimony For: Nursing facilities cannot afford to pay temporary workers the exorbitant wages nursing pools charge.

Testimony Against: Capping nursing pool costs will threaten the availability of temporary hospital nurses.

Testified: Bob Gee, WA Staffing Assn., National Technical Services Assn. (con); Tom Gray, Bethany of the Northwest (pro); Harry Steinmetz, WAHSA (pro); Tom Kearns, DSHS (con); Brendan Williams, WA Health Care Assn. (pro); Dorothy Grainger, Bessie Burton Sullivan Skilled Nursing Res. (pro); Len McComb, Washington State Hospital Association (concerns).