

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1827

As Reported by House Committee On:

Health Care

Title: An act relating to provision of meningococcal immunization information to first-time students by degree-granting postsecondary educational institutions.

Brief Description: Requiring information on meningitis immunization for college students.

Sponsors: Representatives Moeller, Skinner, Fromhold, Schoesler, Romero, Sullivan, Hankins, Hunt, Morrell, Delvin, Cox, Kenney, Hinkle, Linville, Wood, Cody, Dunshee, Schual-Berke, Sehlin and Simpson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 2/27/03, 3/4/03 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires institutions of higher education to provide students being offered on-campus housing with information about meningococcal meningitis.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Benson, Campbell, Clibborn, Darneille, Moeller, Schual-Berke and Skinner.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Bailey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; and Alexander.

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

Meningitis is an infection and inflammation of the membranes and fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Meningitis is most frequently caused by either bacteria or viruses. The bacterial variety is usually the most serious. Meningitis must be treated immediately

to lessen the effects of any potential complications.

Meningococcus is a highly contagious bacterial form of meningitis. It can lead to brain damage, hearing loss, and learning disabilities. It kills about 300 people every year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported that between 1991 and 1997 the number of cases of meningococcal meningitis doubled for people 15 to 24 years old. Common living situations for people in these age groups such as college dormitories, boarding schools, and military bases are at a higher risk for outbreaks of the disease. In 1999 the CDC recommended that all college students receive a vaccination for the disease.

Notifiable conditions are diseases and conditions that the Department of Health (Department) has determined are of such importance to protecting the public health that they must be reported to either a local health officer or the Department. Health care providers, laboratory directors, and health care facilities all have a duty to report occurrences of these diseases and conditions. Health care providers and facilities must report an occurrence of meningococcal meningitis to the local health department immediately and laboratories must do so within two days.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

All postsecondary educational institutions that provide on-campus or group housing are required to provide students who are offered on-campus or group housing with information about meningococcal disease. The information shall address symptoms, risks, and treatment; recommendations to consider receiving a vaccination; and a response form for the student to indicate that he or she has received the information, whether or not they have decided to receive the vaccination, and their signature. The schools are not required to provide the vaccination to students.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The students to receive the information are limited to those who are offered on-campus or group housing by the school. The information that the school must provide is changed from a recommendation to receive a vaccination to a recommendation to consider receiving a vaccination.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 21, 2003.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2004.

Testimony For: College students are four times more likely to contract meningococcal meningitis than the rest of the population. Information about meningitis for college students will make Washington colleges and universities safer.

Testimony Against: Gathering signatures of students will increase fees for student health services and will be a burden on college administrators.

Testified: (In support) Representative Moeller, prime sponsor; Melanie Stewart, Washington Osteopathic Medical Association and Aventis-Pasteur; and Amanda Fertz, Washington Student Lobby.

(Opposed) Judy McNickle, Western Washington University; Tom Woodnutt, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; and Jane Yung Dennie, Washington State University.