
Health Care Committee

HB 1344

Brief Description: Making social security numbers on death certificates confidential.

Sponsors: Representatives Orcutt, Mielke, Moeller, Condotta, McMahan, Upthegrove, Campbell, Nixon and Bush.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that social security numbers on death certificates be kept confidential except as authorized by the surviving spouse or personal representative of the deceased's estate.

Hearing Date: 2/11/03

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

The Department of Health (Department) maintains the state's system of vital records and statistics in the Center for Health Statistics. The term "vital record" includes all birth certificates, marriage certificates, divorce certificates, fetal death certificates, and death certificates. The data elements collected by the Department on vital records must contain at least the same items that are recommended by the United States Department of Health and Human Service's National Center for Health Statistics, including social security numbers.

The Department maintains death records from 1907 to the present. The records are generally used by individuals to document a death in order to establish legal rights and by public health officials to note trends in the causes of death within the population. Researchers may obtain copies of vital records that do not contain any personal identifiers. Personal identifiers include names, addresses, social security numbers, and other information that is likely to lead to the identification of the individual.

Summary of Bill:

If a social security number is on a certificate of death, it shall be located in a confidential section of the form and shall not be available to the public. Only the surviving spouse or personal representative of the estate of the deceased may obtain or authorize the release of

the confidential section of the death certificate.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 6, 2003.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.