

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 2387

C 33 L 04

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Authorizing the release of patient records for the purpose of restoring state mental health hospital cemeteries.

Sponsors: By Representatives Carrell, Talcott, Bush, Lantz, Cox, Pearson, McMahan, Kristiansen, Mielke, Boldt, Morrell, Orcutt and Ahern.

House Committee on Health Care

Senate Committee on Children & Family Services & Corrections

Background:

Between 1887 and 1953, the state buried on hospital grounds more than 7,000 patients who had died while in residence at Northern, Western, and Eastern State Mental Health Hospitals. In 1953, the state discontinued this practice. Most of the graves at these facilities were never marked, although the hospitals retained records of the names and dates of birth and death for the majority of the buried patients.

The law governing patient record confidentiality does not allow the release of patient records, including names and dates of demise, even after death. State hospitals may only release information about the patients buried on hospital grounds to families of the patient. This is one of the primary reasons that cemeteries located on hospital grounds have remained unmarked.

Summary:

The Department of Social and Health Services is permitted to release the medical records of patients interred at state hospital cemeteries for the purpose of marking their headstones or otherwise memorializing their resting place.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 95 0
Senate 45 0 (Senate amended)
House 93 0 (House concurred)

Effective: June 10, 2004