
Health Care Committee

HB 2387

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

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

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows release of records for patients buried more than fifty years ago on the grounds of state mental health hospitals, for the purpose of marking their graves.

Hearing Date: 1/22/04

Staff: Sarah Shirey (786-5793) and Dave Knutson (786-7146).

Background:

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

Current 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 of Bill:

State mental health hospitals are permitted to release the medical records of patients interred at state mental health hospital cemeteries, 50 years after their death, for the purpose of marking their headstones or otherwise memorializing their resting place.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.