
Health Care Committee

SSB 5828

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

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Sheahan, Keiser, Regala, Kastama, Thibaudeau, Hale, Fraser and Winsley).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires post-secondary educational institutions to provide certain students with information about meningococcal meningitis.

Hearing Date: 3/31/03

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 2000 the CDC recommended that college freshmen, especially those living in dormitories, receive information about meningococcal disease and the benefits of vaccination.

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 Bill:

Except for community and technical colleges, all degree-granting postsecondary residential campuses that offer on-campus or group housing must provide all enrolled, matriculated, first-time students with information about meningococcal disease. Community and technical colleges must provide such information to students who are offered on-campus or group housing. The information shall include facts regarding the symptoms, risks, and treatment of the disease, as well as the meningococcal vaccine and its availability.

The schools are not required to provide the vaccination to the student. The bill does not create a private right of action.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 28, 2003.

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