

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6356

As Passed Senate, February 12, 2004

Title: An act relating to physician assistants executing a certain certificate for labor and industries.

Brief Description: Modifying physician assistant provisions.

Sponsors: Senators Honeyford and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/28/04, 2/5/04 [DP].

Passed Senate: 2/12/04, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Winsley, Vice Chair; Brandland, Franklin, Keiser and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Tanya Karwaki (786-7447)

Background: A worker who, in the course of employment, is injured or suffers disability from an occupational disease is entitled to benefits under Washington's industrial insurance law. These benefits include proper and necessary medical and surgical services from a physician of the worker's choice. Currently, a worker entitled to compensation files an application with a certificate from the physician who attended him or her.

Physician assistants are licensed to practice medicine or osteopathic medicine to a limited extent under the supervision of a licensed physician or osteopathic physician respectively. Physician assistants may fill out certificates for workers' compensation, but the certificates must be signed by a physician.

Summary of Bill: Physician assistants practicing with physician supervision may complete the certificate required when applying for noncompensable industrial injuries, but not any occupational diseases. Physician assistants are prohibited from executing time loss cards related to any industrial injuries or any occupational diseases.

The Department of Labor and Industries must report to the Senate Committee on Commerce and Trade and the House Committee on Commerce and Labor on the implementation of this bill by December 1, 2006. Included in the report shall be the effects of this bill on injured worker outcomes, claim costs, and disputed claims.

This bill takes effect July 1, 2004 and expires July 1, 2007.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: July 1, 2004.

Testimony For: This bill would allow physician assistants within their scope of practice to sign certificates. Currently, physician assistants can fill out the form and then must have a physician sign the form, taking time away from the physician. This bill would save time, get compensation to the worker quicker, and cut down on paperwork.

Testimony Other: This bill should be amended to allow physician assistants to sign only for "simple claims."

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Eric Stipley, MD, WACEP (pro); Doug Lanbrecht, MD, WACEP (pro); Carl Nelson, WSMA (pro); David Bender, WAPA/WSMA (pro); John Seabrook, AAPA/WSMA (pro); Amber Balch Carter, AWB (pro w/amendment); Dr. Gary Franklin, Jami Lifka, Dept. of Labor and Industries (neutral w/concerns).

House Amendment(s): It is clarified that physician assistants may assist workers applying for compensation for simple industrial injuries. Physician assistants are prohibited from rating a worker's permanent partial disability or determining a worker's entitlement to compensation. The Department of Labor and Industries must adopt necessary rules.