
Health Care Committee

HB 1463

Brief Description: Requiring schools to provide information on meningococcal immunization.

Sponsors: Representatives Green, Rodne, Cody and Moeller.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that public and private schools provide the parents and guardians of students with information about meningococcal disease at the beginning of every school year.

Hearing Date: 2/11/05

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 all college students receive a vaccination for the disease.

While proof of immunization for meningococcal meningitis is not required for admission to school, meningococcal meningitis is a notifiable condition that health care providers and facilities must report to the local health department immediately and laboratories must report within two days.

Summary of Bill:

All public and private schools must provide the parents and guardians of students with information about meningococcal disease at the beginning of every school year. The information must address the characteristics of the disease; where to find additional information about the

disease and vaccinations for children; and current recommendations from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention regarding receiving the vaccine.

The Department of Health must be consulted regarding the preparation of the informational materials. There is no requirement that the Department of Health or schools provide the vaccination to students. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must develop rules to implement the requirement that information be distributed to students and annually attest that schools are doing so.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 2005.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.