

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1463

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 30, 2005

Title: An act relating to meningococcal immunization.

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

Sponsors: House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Green, Rodne, Cody and Moeller).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/08/05, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/28/05, 3/30/05 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Thibaudeau, Vice Chair; Deccio, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Johnson, Kastama, Kline, Parlette and Poulsen.

Staff: Sharon Swanson (786-7447)

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 February 2005, the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommended that all college freshmen living in a dormitory and all children 11 to 12 years old 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 Amended Bill: All public and private schools must provide the parents and guardians of students in sixth grade and above 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 CDC regarding receiving the vaccine.

The Department of Health (Department) is responsible for the preparation of the informational materials. There is no requirement that the Department or schools provide the vaccination to students.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: The Department of Health is responsible for the preparation of the informational materials and will consult with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Removes the requirement that the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction adopt rules and annually attest that the program has been implemented.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2005.

Testimony For: Meningitis is a terrible disease. It is vital that parents and students have access to information on vaccination and prevention.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Stuart Halsan, Attorney; Cynthia Shurtteff, Washington Chapter of American academy of Pediatrics.