

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5146

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Allowing quality improvement committee confidentiality.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Keiser, Parlette, Kastama and Brandland).

Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care
House Committee on Health Care

Background: State law imposes on all hospitals the same quality improvement requirements and legal safeguards. Quality improvement committee materials are protected from discovery in a civil lawsuit, and people who attend these meetings are generally prohibited from testifying about the meetings. Additionally, the state's Public Records Act exempts quality improvement committee documents from public inspection and copying. However, each hospital quality improvement committee is required to provide at least a semiannual report to the hospital's governing board which must review the quality improvement activities conducted by the committee and any actions taken as a result of those activities.

The requirements are different, though, for board oversight of public hospital districts compared to oversight of nonprofit or for profit health care organizations.

Public hospital districts are municipal corporations that are authorized to own and operate hospitals and other health care facilities and to provide hospital and other health care services for the district residents and other persons. Public hospital commissioners are required to conduct most of their business in public session and are only allowed to discuss one element of quality improvement, provider privileges, in confidential executive session. In contrast, nonprofit or for profit board meetings are not required to be open to the public, so there is no concern for these institutions about waiving their legal safeguards regarding quality improvement.

Summary: Quality improvement committee meetings for public hospital districts may be confidential and may be conducted at executive session. The board of commissioners for the public hospital district may, in turn, review and discuss the report or the activities of a quality improvement committee confidentially and in executive session. Any such review by the board will have the same protections as currently apply to quality improvement committee activities.

Final action of the board of commissioners on the report of the quality improvement committee must be done in public session.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	46	0
House	93	1

Effective: July 24, 2005