

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 1667

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 28, 2007
Ways & Means, April 2, 2007

Title: An act relating to fairness and equity in health professions licensing fees.

Brief Description: Regarding fairness and equity in health professions licensing fees.

Sponsors: Representatives Green, Cody, Morrell, Ormsby, Moeller and Simpson.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/14/07, 71-24.

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/26/07, 3/28/07 [DP-WM].
Ways & Means: 4/02/07 [DPA, DNP]

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Fairley, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Marr and Parlette.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Pridemore, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Fairley, Hatfield, Hobbs, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Oemig, Parlette, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller and Tom.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Honeyford and Schoesler.

Staff: Steve Jones (786-7440)

Background: The Secretary of Health (Secretary) and the various health profession boards and commissions regulate the 57 health professions and 45 types of health care facilities and services. The Secretary is responsible for establishing fees for all of these regulated entities. Fees for each program must be established according to the amount necessary to defray the costs of administering the program. Fees may be waived by the Secretary when it is determined that it is not in the best interest of public health and safety.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Engrossed Bill: In addition to fees required for a health care provider credential, a \$1.50 annual surcharge is placed upon all health care provider credentials issued after January 1, 2008. Money received from the surcharge shall be used to reduce the fees for members of any profession that has an annual credentialing fee above \$500. The surcharge expires on July 1, 2011.

The Department of Health (Department) must review the effectiveness of the surcharge in eliminating inequities between professions in the amounts of credentialing fees. The Department must submit the report to the Legislature by November 15, 2010.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED AMENDMENT(S) AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Ways & Means): No surcharge is imposed. The Department of Health is directed to submit to the Legislature an evaluation of the economic benefits of the midwifery licensing program to the state's health care system, and the effects of a credential surcharge in providing greater equity among licensing fees.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Health & Long-Term Care): PRO: Health professions with fewer members pay more in license fees and for professions like midwives it will drive them out of the practice. It is important to hold down fees so that access to these services is preserved. There is an increasing demand for midwives and the state benefits from the lower cost of care.

Persons Testifying (Health & Long-Term Care): PRO: Representative Green, prime sponsor; Nick Federici, Audrey Levine, Carolee Hall, Midwives Association of Washington State; Melanie Dickson, citizen.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Midwives are being driven out of business because the limited number of licensees is driving the fee above \$3,000 per year. This has a devastating impact on the choices available to expectant mothers, many of whom receive state supported medical care. The result will be much higher medical costs to the state. Licensed midwifery must be protected from exorbitant licensing fees.

CON: Fees should not be collected from those who are not benefiting from the fees. Fees from one health profession should not be used to subsidize another health profession.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Nick Federici, Audrey Levine, Midwives Association of Washington State.

CON: Brad Tower, Optometric Physicians of Washington.