

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6135

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, January 31, 2008

Title: An act relating to scoliosis screening in schools.

Brief Description: Eliminating requirements for scoliosis screening in schools.

Sponsors: Senators Marr and Berkey.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/28/08, 1/31/08 [DP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Tom, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Hobbs, Holmquist, Kauffman, McDermott, Oemig and Rasmussen.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Weinstein.

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Scoliosis is a disorder in which there is a sideways curve of the spine, or backbone. Treatment may include observation, bracing, or surgery. Surgery may involve fusing together two or more bones in the spine.

Under current Washington law, the Superintendent of Public Instruction must require scoliosis screening for public school students at least three times between fourth and eleventh grades. According to rules established by the Department of Health, students must be screened annually in fifth, seventh, and ninth grades. The procedures used must be consistent with the standards of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. State law requires that parents or guardians of any student who has, or is suspected to have, scoliosis are notified of the screening results and provided information about scoliosis and the services available from health care providers.

According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 148,813 students were screened for scoliosis in Washington in the 2004-05 school year. The screening program resulted in referrals to a health care provider for 3.39 percent of the screened students and .02 percent were braced or had surgery.

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Summary of Bill: The statutes that establish the scoliosis screening program for public school students are repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 2008.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Many kids are coming to school with increased health demands. School nurses must ensure that all kids with life-threatening conditions, such as diabetes, asthma, and seizures, must have nursing care plans in place before school starts. Nurses make sure that students have needed emergency medicines, give appropriate medications, and educate and train schools staff. Scoliosis is a disease that is neither educationally relevant nor supported by evidence-based research. Scoliosis has a low prevalence, but a large number of false positives occur, leading to over-referrals in the health system. School is not an appropriate setting for scoliosis screening; it takes time away from class, and there is not enough privacy. School nurses are stretched thin, and rescinding the scoliosis mandate would free up some of their time.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Linda Wendy Jones, Peggy Brown, OSPI; Shirley Carstens, School Nurse Organization of Washington.