

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5074

As of February 5, 2009

Title: An act relating to scoliosis screening in schools.

Brief Description: Concerning scoliosis screening in schools.

Sponsors: Senators Marr, Jacobsen, Sheldon, Fairley, Franklin, Regala, Oemig, Hargrove, Hobbs, Keiser, Jarrett, Kline, Kilmer and Tom.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/05/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

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 Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must require scoliosis screening for public school students at least three times between fourth and eleventh grades. According to rules established by the State Board 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 OSPI, 139,474 students were screened for scoliosis in Washington in the 2006-07 school year. As a result of the screening program, 3,800 students were referred to a health care provider and 59 students were braced or had surgery.

Summary of Bill: The statutes that establish the scoliosis screening program for public school students are repealed.

Appropriation: None.

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.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 22, 2009.

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: Nurses have increasing demands on their time, including immunizations, health screens, and physical and mental health care services. Scoliosis screening is not educationally relevant nor is it a significant public issue. In addition, there is no good test for scoliosis; only 10 percent of cases are found by mass screenings. These screenings also may lead to false positives. The number of states screening for scoliosis is declining because best practices do not recommend it.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Christine Cardell, School Nurse Organization of Washington; Gayle Thronson, OSPI.