

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5852

As of February 17, 2009

Title: An act relating to the practice of health care assistants.

Brief Description: Concerning health care assistants.

Sponsors: Senators Murray, Becker and Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/16/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: Health care assistants are unlicensed individuals who assist licensed health care practitioners in providing health care to patients. The Secretary of the Department of Health (Secretary) has established minimum requirements for a health care facility or health care practitioner to certify a health care assistant capable of performing certain functions. The Secretary has also established minimum requirements for each category of health care assistant. Health care assistants are permitted to administer skin tests and subcutaneous, intradermal, intramuscular, and intravenous injections and minor invasive procedures to withdraw blood. Health care assistants must be under the supervision of a health care practitioner (delegator) to perform these procedures. Delegators are required to maintain a list of medications, diagnostic agents, and the route of administration that the delegator has authorized for injection by the health care assistant. This list is provided to the Secretary. Health care assistants are given restricted authority to administer Food and Drug Administration approved vaccines and immunizations by injection.

Summary of Bill: In addition to those tasks currently permitted, health care assistants may administer certain over-the-counter and prescribed medications by a variety of methods. The medications that health care assistants are permitted to administer are limited to specific categories and types from a list developed by the Department of Health (DOH), and are to be administered while the patient is in the care of a physician, nurse, physician assistant, or advanced registered nurse practitioner. Health care assistants must also have successfully graduated from an accredited medical assistance program approved by DOH.

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: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: We will be offering some agreed upon amendments to this bill. We agree that health care assistant responsibilities could be expanded. Doctors and nurses are being increasingly pulled away from duties such as medication administration because they are dealing with more critically ill patients. We should be more efficient, and have consistent standards.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Carl Nelson, Washington State Medical Association; Elizabeth Adolphsen, Everett Community College; Claire Glover, The Everett Clinic; Sophia Aragon, Washington State Nurses Association.