

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1015

As Passed House:
February 14, 2011

Title: An act relating to exemption from immunization.

Brief Description: Concerning exemption from immunization.

Sponsors: Representatives Bailey, Cody, Hinkle, Appleton, Seaquist, Roberts, Kagi, Jinkins, Johnson, Warnick, Orcutt, Moeller, Pedersen, Billig, Ladenburg, McCune and Van De Wege.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 1/19/11, 1/31/11 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/14/11, 79-14.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the form used to exempt a child from school immunizations to include a statement, to be signed by a health care practitioner, that information on the benefits and risks of immunization has been provided to the parent or legal guardian.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Jinkins, Vice Chair; Schmick, Ranking Minority Member; Hinkle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bailey, Clibborn, Green, Harris, Kelley, Moeller and Van De Wege.

Staff: Morgan Powell (786-7119) and Chris Cordes (786-7103).

Background:

State law requires school children and children in licensed day care centers to provide proof of immunization against certain vaccine-preventable diseases. The stated purpose of the law is to promote the protection of the health of the public and individuals by providing a means

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for the eventual achievement of full immunization of school-age children against these diseases.

The Washington State Board of Health (Board) has adopted requirements, which specify the immunizations all children must receive before entering schools, preschools, and day care. However, a child will be exempt in whole or in part from the immunizations measures required by the Board when one of the following certifications is submitted:

- a written certification signed by a physician stating that a particular vaccine is not advisable for the child (Once such vaccine is no longer contraindicated the child will be required to be vaccinated.);
- a written certification signed by any parent or legal guardian of the child stating that the signator has religious beliefs contrary to the required immunization measures; or
- a written certification signed by any parent or legal guardian of the child stating the signator has philosophical or personal objections to the immunization.

Summary of Bill:

The form used to exempt a child from school immunization requirements must include a statement, to be signed by a health care practitioner, that information about the benefits and risks of immunization was provided to the parent or legal guardian signing the immunization exemption. This change applies to forms used on or after the bill's effective date.

In addition to physicians, all health care practitioners are permitted to sign the written certification stating that a particular vaccine is not advisable for the child.

A health care practitioner is defined as a licensed physician, licensed naturopath, licensed physician assistant, or a licensed advanced registered nurse practitioner.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The state has one of the highest exemption rates in the country regarding immunization from certain vaccine-preventable diseases. School-age children are exposed to diseases that immunizations can eradicate. Non-immunized children put other children at risk. A majority of parents are obtaining exemptions of required immunizations for philosophical reasons because getting an exemption is easier than locating medical records and scheduling an appointment to receive the required immunization for their child. Exemptions that require a signature from a health care practitioner will help make claiming an exemption a decision based less on convenience. Health care practitioners will have the opportunity to educate parents on the risks and benefits surrounding immunizations from vaccine-preventable diseases and eliminate any confusion. There are large public health costs, and costs to families, when an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease occurs.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Bailey, prime sponsor; Dr. Maxine Hayes, Washington State Department of Health; Dr. Beth Harvey, Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Charla Dunham, School Nurse Organization of Washington; Dr. Gary Goldbaum, Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials; and Charron Plumer, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.