

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 2419

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As of February 24, 2020

**Title:** An act relating to studying barriers to the use of the Washington death with dignity act.

**Brief Description:** Studying barriers to the use of the Washington death with dignity act.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representatives Rude, Macri, Kloba, Peterson, Springer, Cody, Ormsby, Riccelli and Doglio).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/14/20, 67-31.

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long Term Care: 2/24/20.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the University of Washington to study barriers to accessing Washington's Death with Dignity Act.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

**Staff:** LeighBeth Merrick (786-7445)

**Background:** Washington's Death with Dignity Act. In 2008, voters approved initiative 1000 which established The Death with Dignity Act (Act). The Act allows terminally-ill adult Washington residents with six months or less to live to request medication that they may self administer to end their life. The person must first make an oral request to a physician for medication, followed by a written request, followed by a second oral request. A waiting period of 15 days is required between the time of the first oral request and the writing of the prescription. The person has the option to rescind the request at any time. Once the request has been processed and fulfilled, the medication may be self-administered. Physicians, pharmacists, and health care providers are not required to participate, and health care providers may prohibit participation on their premises. Facilities that prohibit participation may not sanction physicians or pharmacists for participating under certain

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circumstances. A health care provider participating in good faith compliance with the Act is not subject to civil or criminal liability, or professional disciplinary action.

**Summary of Bill:** The University of Washington (UW), in consultation with DOH, must study and report on the barriers facing Washington residents who wish to access the Death with Dignity Act (Act), including:

- a lack of awareness of the Act; the 15-day waiting period;
- the effectiveness of pain control medication during the 15-day waiting period;
- concerns that inhibit participation of health care providers; hospital, medical, hospice, and long-term care providers' policies that restrict the participation and distribution of information about the Act;
- geographic access to pharmacies that dispense medications relat

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** People did testify

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Linda Estes; Arline Hinckley, End of Life WA; Lisa Thatcher, Washington State Hospital Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.