

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1972

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Health & Long Term Care, February 16, 2024

Title: An act relating to increasing the licensure fees that support the Washington physicians health program.

Brief Description: Increasing the licensure fees that support the Washington physicians health program.

Sponsors: Representatives Simmons, Harris, Reed, Ormsby and Riccelli.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/6/24, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Health & Long Term Care: 2/15/24, 2/16/24 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the surcharge fees for the Washington Physician Health Program for physicians, osteopathic physicians, podiatric physicians, dentists, physician assistants, and veterinarians.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Cleveland, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Muzzall, Assistant Ranking Member; Conway, Dhingra, Holy, Padden, Randall and Van De Wege.

Staff: Julie Tran (786-7283)

Background: Washington Physicians Health Program. If a disciplining authority determines that unprofessional conduct by a licensee may be the result of an applicable impairing or potentially impairing health condition, the disciplining authority may refer the licensee to a physician health program or a voluntary substance use disorder monitoring program approved by the disciplining authority in lieu of disciplinary action. If the licensee

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does not consent to the referral or fails to meet the requirements of the program, the disciplining authority may take formal disciplinary action against the licensee.

The Washington Medical Commission, the Board of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery, the Dental Quality Assurance Commission, the Podiatric Medical Board, and the State Veterinarian Board of Governors all contract with the same entity to implement their physician health program. The entity does not itself provide treatment but provides services such as referring practitioners to treatment programs and monitoring compliance.

Physician Health Program costs are financed primarily by surcharges on license issuances and renewals. For physicians, osteopathic physicians, podiatric physicians, dentists, and physician assistants, the fee is \$50. For veterinarians, the fee is \$25.

Summary of Bill: The license surcharge limit for the Physician Health Program of \$50 for physicians, osteopathic physicians, podiatric physicians, dentists, and physician assistants is increased to \$70. The surcharge limit of \$25 for veterinarians is increased to \$35.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The Physician Health Program gets support from license surcharges which are contributed by each of the impacted professions and the surcharge increases are needed to keep up with the cost of the program. Without the increased surcharges, there could be negative impacts to the program.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Chris Bundy, Executive Medical Director, Washington Physicians Health Program; Sheldon Cooper, Executive Director, Washington Physicians Health Program.

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