

Health & Human Services
Appropriations Committee

HB 2953

Brief Description: Transferring the functions of the home care quality authority and the department of services for the blind to the department of social and health services.

Sponsors: Representative Pettigrew; by request of Governor Gregoire.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Abolishes the Home Care Quality Authority (HCQA) and the individual home care provider referral registry.
- Transfers the authority to obtain consumer stakeholder input for collective bargaining and communicate that input to the Governor's Labor Relations Office from the HCQA to the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).
- Abolishes the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) and transfers all functions of the DSB to the DSHS.

Hearing Date: 2/2/10

Staff: Carma Matti-Jackson (786-7140).

Background:

Home Care Quality Authority (HCQA).

The HCQA was established by citizen initiative in November 2001, to regulate and improve the quality of in-home care services by recruiting, training, and stabilizing the work force of individual providers. The agency is governed by a nine-member board that includes former and current consumers of in-home care services and consists of a representative from the Developmental Disabilities Council, the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and

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Employment, the State Council on Aging, and the Washington State Association of Area Agencies on Aging. The primary duties of the agency are:

- matching and referring pre-qualified in-home care workers with consumers through the statewide Home Care Referral Registry (Registry);
- screening potential in-home care workers for the registry by obtaining background checks for criminal history, abuse, and neglect;
- educating consumers and their families about the choices available for receiving in-home care services and the process for hiring and supervising individual providers;
- facilitating input from consumers in the collective bargaining process for home care workers; and
- serving as a Trustee to the Service Employees International Union 775 Northwest's Health Care Trust and Training Partnership.

As of June 2009, the HCQA referral registry contained approximately 3,200 approved providers and had about 4,200 eligible consumers using it.

Department of Services for the Blind (DSB).

The DSB was created by the Legislature in 1983 and later confirmed by repealing sunset legislation in 1987. The DSB is a state rehabilitation agency that offers assistance to persons who are blind or visually impaired. It also provides services for employers interested in accommodating or hiring workers with vision loss. The primary duties of this agency are:

- career planning and training for clients including support in alternative skills of blindness, academic training, and specific job skills such as the use of computers;
- evaluating job sites to determine the technology solutions required to enable an employee who is blind or visually impaired to work effectively;
- consulting employers interested in accommodating or hiring workers with vision loss;
- providing instruction and equipment to people with visual disabilities who are age 55 and older, so they can maintain or improve their independence in their home and community;
- assisting families and schools to help blind and visually impaired children receive the services necessary to achieve full educational, social and vocational integration in their school and community; and
- supporting parents through in-home consultations, education workshops, and newsletters.

In fiscal year 2009, the DSB provides vocational rehabilitation services to 1,200 clients and independent living services to approximately 1,600 clients.

Summary of Bill:

The HCQA is abolished, and the provider referral registry is eliminated. The Department of Social and Human Services (DSHS) is given the authority to continue obtaining consumer stakeholder input for collective bargaining for home care workers and communicating this information to the Governor's Labor Relations Office.

The DSB is abolished and all functions previously performed by the DSB are transferred to the DSHS.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Received on 1/29/2010.

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