
Health Care & Wellness Committee

SSB 5798

Brief Description: Concerning medical marijuana.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Kohl-Welles, McCaslin, Keiser, Pflug and Kline).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Expands the list of professionals who may authorize the use of medical marijuana to physicians, osteopathic physicians, physician assistants, osteopathic physician assistants, naturopaths, and advanced registered nurse practitioners.

Hearing Date: 2/18/10

Staff: Brian Kilgore (786-7119) and Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

In November 1998 voters approved Initiative 692, the Washington State Medical Use of Marijuana Act (Act). The act allows for the limited medical use of marijuana by patients with "terminal or debilitating illnesses." A number of diseases and conditions, including cancer and anorexia, are defined by the Act as terminal or debilitating illnesses. The Washington State Medical Quality Assurance Commission is authorized to approve additional diseases and conditions as terminal or debilitating illnesses for the purposes of the Act.

Under the Act, a qualifying patient is a patient of a physician who has been diagnosed by that physician as having a terminal or debilitating illness. A physician may provide a qualifying patient with a signed statement that, in the physician's professional opinion, the patient may benefit from the medical use of marijuana. An individual with such a signed physician's statement is authorized to use marijuana for treatment of his or her terminal or debilitating illness. Physicians are excepted from the state's criminal laws and shall not be penalized in any manner, or denied any right or privilege, for advising qualifying patients about the risks and benefits of medical marijuana use, or authorizing medical marijuana use for qualifying patients.

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.

Summary of Bill:

The list of professionals who may authorize the use of medical marijuana is expanded to physicians, osteopathic physicians, physician assistants, osteopathic physician assistants, naturopaths, and advanced registered nurse practitioners.

For the purposes of the Act, all instances of the term "physician" are replaced with the term "health care professional." A health care professional is defined as a physician, osteopathic physician, physician assistant, osteopathic physician assistant, naturopath, or advanced registered nurse practitioner.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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