

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2849

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to nursing home administrator licensing.

Brief Description: Modifying nursing home administrator licensing.

Sponsors: Representatives Dyer, Cody, Casada, Conway, Hymes, Murray, Skinner, Morris, Crouse, Sherstad, Backlund, H. Sommers and Silver.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 2/1/96 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/9/96, 97-0.

Senate Amended.

House Concurred.

Passed Legislature.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Dyer, Chairman; Backlund, Vice Chairman; Hymes, Vice Chairman; Cody, Ranking Minority Member; Murray, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Conway; Crouse; Morris; Sherstad; Skinner and H. Sommers.

Staff: Antonio Sanchez (786-7383).

Background: The Christian Science churches in the state of Washington maintain over 60 congregations. Christian Scientists believe that health care is effected through prayer. Spiritual treatment is relied upon as the most effective healing method and Christian Scientists generally choose to rely on spiritual means alone for their care.

Christian Scientists have nursing home facilities for persons relying on Christian Science spiritual treatment, but whose basic physical needs cannot be met at home. The physical care provided in a Christian Science nursing home is non-medical and non-invasive, consisting of assistance with feeding, grooming, and providing general comfort. The only remedial treatment furnished is prayer or spiritual treatment in accordance with the Christian Science faith.

Currently, there is one Christian Science nursing home facility in Washington State. It is licensed as a nursing home. This nursing home, however, is exempt by statute from state supervision, regulation, or control of the remedial care or treatment of patients. The Christian Science nursing home receives Medicare and Medicaid funds. All nursing homes must have a full-time, on-site, licensed administrator including Christian Science facilities. Under existing law, the administrator can be granted a limited license to administer a facility such as the Christian Science nursing home, without meeting the requirements for medical training, education, or background normally required of nursing home administrators. Current law requires that the Christian Science facility must be certified by the Christian Science church.

The Christian Science church has decided not to maintain the certification program due to a belief that such administrative functions are inconsistent with its ecclesiastical mission. A Commission for Accreditation of Christian Science Nursing Organizations/Facilities has been chosen to replace the certification program. Because of this change in church procedures transferring certification to accreditation, the only Christian Science nursing home facility in Washington State could be required to remove its current administrator. To avert this event, a technical modification is needed in current statute that would eliminate the need for the nursing home to be certified by the church.

Summary of Bill: Nursing homes that specifically provide care and healing for its residents through prayer and spiritual means are no longer required to have a certification program as long as they comply with any other federal requirements. A limited license can be granted to applicants who work as administrators in facilities that rely upon treatment by prayer or spiritual means in accordance with the creed of any well recognized church or religious denomination.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: All nursing homes must have a full time, on-site, licensed administrator, including Christian Science facilities. Under existing law, the facility must be certified by the church or religious denomination in order for the limited license to be issued. The church has decided to change its certification program to accreditation program. The requested bill will prevent the Puyallup facility from suddenly being without a licensed administrator simply because of a technical change in procedure.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Cliff Armstrong, Christian Science Church.