

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2849

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 23, 1996

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 & Long-Term Care: 2/23/96 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Quigley, Chair; Wojahn, Vice Chair; Deccio, Fairley, Franklin, Thibaudeau, Winsley and Wood.

Staff: Wendy Saunders (786-7439)

Background: The 60 Christian Science congregations in Washington rely on prayer and spiritual means for their health care and most Christian Scientists choose to rely on spiritual means alone for their care.

There is one nursing home in the state, located in Puyallup, that is operated for individuals who rely on Christian Science for spiritual treatment, but whose basic physical needs cannot be met at home. The only physical care provided in the nursing home is non-medical and non-invasive, and consists of assistance with feeding, grooming, and providing general comfort. Prayer and spiritual means are the only forms of remedial care and treatment provided in the nursing home.

This nursing home is licensed by the state, but is exempt from state supervision, regulation, or control for the remedial care or treatment of patients. The nursing home is also required to have an administrator, but that administrator can be granted a limited license. Individuals with these limited licenses do not need to meet the requirements for medical training, education, or background normally required of nursing home administrators, but 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 nursing home 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 administrator to be certified by the church.

Summary of Amended Bill: Administrators of nursing homes that specifically provide care and healing for its residents through prayer and spiritual means are no longer required to be certified by the church or denomination. The limited license is only issued for those who rely upon treatment by prayer or spiritual means in accordance with the creed of any well recognized church or religious denomination.

Amended Bill Compared to Original: There were technical amendments to correct internal references in the statute.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The Church of Christ, Scientist will no longer maintain a certification program because it is in conflict with the church's ecclesiastical mission. Without a change in the statute the current administrator will need to be removed. The change will also make this section consistent with other religious exemptions that appear in statute. This bill does not change any oversight requirements that are currently placed on the nursing home.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Cliff Armstrong, Christian Science Church.