

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6291

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As of January 10, 1996

**Title:** An act relating to confidential information received by the insurance commissioner.

**Brief Description:** Protecting confidential information.

**Sponsors:** Senators Prentice, Fraser, Kohl, Thibaudeau and Pelz; by request of Insurance Commissioner.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Financial Institutions & Housing: 1/11/96.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS & HOUSING

**Staff:** Catherine Mele (786-7470)

**Background:** The state's public disclosure law requires agency records to be available for public inspection and copying. Any agency that receives a request for public records must respond in writing within five days of receiving the request. The response must either include the information requested, an acknowledgement of receipt of the request with an estimate of a reasonable time for response, or a denial of the request. An agency is authorized to deny a public records request only if the public disclosure law provides a specific exemption that applies to the request.

There are concerns that persons who complain to or make inquiries of the office of the Insurance Commissioner are not adequately protected under the public disclosure laws.

**Summary of Bill:** A new exemption is added to the public disclosure law that prevents release of information which identifies any person who makes a complaint or inquiry to the office of the Insurance Commissioner. This exemption includes health care information in the possession of the office of the Insurance Commissioner.

Persons covered by the exemption are permitted to waive it in writing.

An insurance contract cannot change the rights granted under the exemption.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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