

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6347

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 2, 1996

Title: An act relating to whistleblower complaints against health carriers.

Brief Description: Providing for whistleblower complaints against health carriers.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl, Quigley, Winsley, Wojahn, Wood, Franklin and Thibaudeau.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/26/96, 2/2/96 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6347 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Wendy Saunders (786-7439)

Background: A 1995 law provides protections to individuals who complain to the Department of Health about improper quality of care when health care providers or health care facilities violate state law or rule. These "whistleblowers" receive the same protections that are provided for other whistleblowers, including confidentiality and freedom from workplace reprisals.

Concern exists that health carrier violations may go unreported because no protections exist for individuals who make reports against health carriers.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Health carriers are added to the list of entities that individuals can report for improper quality of care under the protection of whistle blower laws. Improper quality of care is any practice that violates state health or insurance laws or rules. The protections are the same as those that exist for whistleblowers under other sections of state law. They include keeping the identity of the complaining individual confidential and protecting them from workplace reprisals.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Whistleblowers are required to make reports of improper quality of care to the agency that has jurisdiction over the entity involved in the complaint instead of reporting complaints to the Department of Health or Office of the Insurance Commissioner.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 17, 1995.

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

Testimony For: Adding whistleblower protections for complaints against health carriers is an important addition to the existing law. It is commonsensical to protect the confidentiality of people who bring violations of the law to the attention of the proper authorities. The Department of Adult and Aging Services should be added to the bill and individuals should be required to make reports to the agency that regulates the entity implicated in the complaint.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Kohl, prime sponsor; Kathy Stout, Department of Health; Ellie Menzies, 1199/SEIU.