

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6641

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

**Title:** An act relating to unsupervised practice by dental hygienists.

**Brief Description:** Regulating unsupervised practice by dental hygienists.

**Sponsors:** Senators Thibaudeau, Moyer, Kohl and Hochstatter.

**Brief History:**

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

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6641 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:** Rhoda Jones (786-7198)

**Background:** Under current law, dental hygienists may practice within the scope of their credential without the supervision of a licensed dentist only if they are employed by health care facilities. These include hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies, group homes, facilities operated by the Department of Social and Health Services or the Department of Corrections, and public health facilities.

They are required to have previously worked under the supervision of a licensed dentist for at least two years in the previous five years in order to qualify for employment in unsupervised practice.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The Department of Health is directed to study the practice of unsupervised dental hygiene practice in community clinics and report back to the Legislature by December 30, 1996.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The original bill would have permitted dental hygienists to practice without the supervision of a dentist, providing they had worked for two years previously under a dentist. They would not have been able to administer anesthetics. The substitute bill struck all permissive language and solely authorized a study.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** Dental hygienists provide a vital service to populations who either can't afford to go to a dental office for care, or can't get to one.

**Testimony Against:** Hygienists are not given enough training to practice independently.

**Testified:** Doreen Naughton, Sandra Daw, Anita Munson, Jeff Larson, WSDHA (pro); Steve Boruchowitz, DOH; Dr. Victor Barry, WA State Dental Assn. (con); Linda Hull, WDA (con).