

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2601

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**As Reported By House Committee On:**  
Health Care

**Title:** An act relating to establishing a commission to study end-of-life issues.

**Brief Description:** Establishing a commission to study end-of-life issues.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Murray, Dyer, Cody, Poulsen, Anderson, Butler, Dickerson and Ogden.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Health Care: 2/3/98 [DP].

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Dyer, Chairman; Backlund, Vice Chairman; Skinner, Vice Chairman; Cody, Ranking Minority Member; Murray, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson; Conway; Parlette; Sherstad; Wood and Zellinsky.

**Staff:** John Welsh (786-7133).

**Background:** End-of-life issues are assuming more importance to individuals, families and society today for a variety of reasons. The increase of the over-65 age group may double early in the next century, and the over-85 age group is increasing six times as fast as the general population. This will focus on the needs towards chronic, prolonged and expensive health care for the elderly. Additionally, advances in medical technology, the adequacy of pain management, availability of hospice services, increasing incidents of suicide, and state and federal court pronouncements on rights of terminal patients for dignified deaths are posing fundamental questions about extending life and prolonging death in a modern society. End-of-life issues involving not only quality of care but quality of life need to be fully and openly explored by community and policy leaders for their far-reaching consequences on existing and future policy imperatives.

**Summary of Bill:** The Governor is directed to form a commission to study end-of-life issues and make recommendations to the Legislature on state policies and private sector practices affecting persons approaching the end of life. The commission shall study issues meeting end-of-life challenges of the aging, including the role of health

professionals in fulfilling the quality of life and quality of care of terminal patients, the effectiveness of pain management including palliative care, sufficiency of advance directives in furthering patient choices, and access to hospice services.

The Governor must appoint individuals from a variety of disciplines and perspectives specializing in eldercare and elderlaw, spiritual leaders and educators, health professionals and other persons with expertise on end-of-life issues. Two members each from the Senate and House will be ex officio members. Members serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for travel expenses. The commission shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and Legislature by December 1, 1998, at which date it expires.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** None.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** None.