

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1058

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 25, 1997

Title: An act relating to the disclosure of information obtained by the department of health related to meeting licensing standards in hospitals.

Brief Description: Providing for disclosure of information obtained by the department of health related to meeting licensing standards in hospitals.

Sponsors: House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Dyer, Cody and Backlund; by request of Department of Health).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/19/97, 3/25/97 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Benton, Franklin, Strannigan and Wojahn.

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Background: Hospitals are licensed by the Department of Health, which sets quality assurance standards, conducts site visits, and responds to consumer complaints.

Information about complaints, including the result of site visits or any other information about a hospital's license, is currently not disclosed to the public until there is a formal administrative action taken against the license. In practice, few formal administrative actions are ever initiated against a hospital license. When the department finds that a hospital is not meeting quality standards, the hospital is given the opportunity to correct the problem and the department verifies that the hospital has implemented a correction plan. In the absence of formal administrative actions, the public has virtually no access to information about a hospital record.

Summary of Bill: Information received by the Department of Health relative to a hospital's license must be disclosed to the public upon request, consistent with the provisions of the Public Disclosure Act applicable to information held by state agencies. Information about a complaint is disclosed to the public after the department completes its assessment of compliance with licensing standards. However, confidential information protected by law, such as patient records, cannot be disclosed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The bill will allow meaningful information to be provided to consumers in a timely fashion.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Kathy Stout, Department of Health; Andy Davidson, Washington State Hospital Association.