

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5447

---

As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Health & Long-Term Care, January 30, 1998

**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:** Senators Deccio, Wojahn, Wood and Fairley.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 1/29/98, 1/30/98 [DPS].

---

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

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5447 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

**Staff:** Rhoda Jones (786-7198)

**Background:** Hospitals are licensed by the Department of Health (DOH), 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 the facility, is currently not disclosed to the public until there is a formal administrative action taken 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 no access to information about a hospital record.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** Information received by the Department of Health related to a hospital's license and complaint investigations is subject to disclosure no sooner than three days following the hospital's receipt of the department's assessment report. This information may be disclosed immediately after the hospital has received documents from DOH initiating action taken against the license.

Information collected by a public hospital's quality improvement committee is not publicly disclosable.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The original bill did not provide for a three-day waiting period before DOH could release the information. The original bill also did not

make information received by quality improvement committees in public hospitals exempt from public disclosure.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** This allows for more information to be available to the public on serious matters pertaining to hospitals' licenses.

**Testimony Against:** Too much information about what goes on in hospitals is already protected. This further denies access to information.

**Testified:** Patty Hayes, Kathy Stout, DOH (pro); Lisa Thatcher, Washington State Hospital Association (pro); Diana Kramer, Washington Newspaper Publishers Association (con).