

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5388

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 1, 1999

Title: An act relating to the endorsement of school sealant endorsed dental hygienists.

Brief Description: Allowing endorsed dental hygienists to provide sealants to low-income school children.

Sponsors: Senators Deccio and Thibaudeau.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/8/99, 3/1/99 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5388 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Thibaudeau, Chair; Costa, Deccio, Franklin, Johnson and Winsley.

Staff: Rhoda Jones (786-7198)

Background: In 1995 the University of Washington conducted a survey of dental disease among third graders statewide and found that 20 percent of those examined experienced 84 percent of the overall tooth decay. The application of sealants has been found to retard tooth decay when applied properly and in the appropriate populations.

Currently, licensed dental hygienists may only apply sealants in school settings under the direct supervision of a licensed dentist. The Department of Health has helped set up school based sealant programs in 13 public health jurisdictions around the state. There has been a shortage of dentists available to supervise dental hygienists in school programs.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Licensed dental hygienists may receive an endorsement to assess for and apply sealants to low income, rural and other at-risk populations in cooperation with public health jurisdictions in school-based, school-linked sealant programs.

Dental hygienists who seek endorsement as school sealant dental hygienists must complete the Washington State Sealant Guidelines and Training developed by the Department of Health. Endorsed hygienists must ensure that each patient who receives sealants under the provisions of this act is referred in writing to a dentist for follow-up care.

The secretary may adopt rules to implement this legislation.

The Department of Health must report back to the Legislature by December 1, 2003, on the impact of granting school sealant endorsements to dental hygienists.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill adds school-based and school-linked– programs. Language also requires referrals to dentists be in writing and authorizes the Secretary of Health to impose a fee for implementing this act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 29, 1999.

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

Testimony For: Dental hygienists are trained to provide sealants. Through an endorsement program, hygienists could work independently in school settings and greatly increase access to preventive dental care for low-income and at-risk children.

Testimony Against: Adequate training and involvement of dentists could make a sealant program work with both dental assistants and dental hygienists. There needs to be a direct link to dentists to ensure that serious problems do not arise.

Testified: PRO: Leslee Austin, WSHDA; Pat Brown, DOH; Norma Wells, UW Dental Hygiene Program; Laurie Ghigler, WSHDA; CON: Linda Hull, WSDA; Mary Smith, WSDA.