

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5430

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

Title: An act relating to the office of women's health.

Brief Description: Creating the office of women's health within the department of health.

Sponsors: Senators Wojahn, Winsley, Jacobsen, Hale, Kohl-Welles, Thibaudeau, Benton, Rasmussen, Long, Fraser, Prentice, Shin, Gardner, Heavey, McAuliffe, Patterson, Franklin, Costa, Eide, B. Sheldon and Spanel.

Brief History:

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5430 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Christopher Blake (786-7446)

Background: In the past, studies have indicated that women were regularly excluded from medical research studies at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In response, NIH and other federal and state agencies have created offices devoted to women's health issues.

In Washington, the Department of Health has established the Women's Health Resource Network (WHRN) to provide a forum for incorporating women's health needs into the department's existing programs, but it is not a distinct entity within the department. There is a perceived need to create an actual office for addressing the health concerns of women with dedicated staff and specific funds.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Women's Health Advisory Committee is created. The committee is composed of ten members to be appointed by the Governor. The committee is instructed to advise the Department of Health in the development and coordination of policies and programs relating to women's health. \$10,000 is appropriated for the committee for each of the next two years.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The Office of Women's Health is replaced by the Women's Health Advisory Committee consisting of ten members appointed by the Governor. Mandatory duties are changed to advisory responsibilities. Liaison functions are eliminated. The authority to solicit and accept grants is removed. \$10,000 is appropriated each year to fund the committee.

Appropriation: \$10,000 is appropriated for the committee for each of the next two years.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 1999.

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

Testimony For: Women's health needs are different from those facing men and, therefore, require a single entity to address these unique needs. There is an ongoing need to better understand women's health needs and women's health promotion activities and this committee will help the Department of Health to focus its efforts in these respects.

Testimony Against: This office shows favoritism to women and is unconstitutional and contrary to Initiative 200.

Testified: Senator Wojahn, prime sponsor; Ann Simons, Sun Mountain Group (pro); Dr. Maxine Hayes, Department of Health (informational); John Marshall (con).