

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5499

As Passed Senate, March 9, 1999

Title: An act relating to in-home care agency licensure.

Brief Description: Making modifications to the home health, hospice, and home care agency licensure law.

Sponsors: Senators Wojahn, Deccio, Franklin, Winsley, Costa, McAuliffe, Kline and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/4/99, 2/17/99 [DP].
Passed Senate, 3/9/99, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Rhoda Jones (786-7198)

Background: The home care licensure law regulates home health, hospice, and home care agencies. Implementing legislation was in 1988, with some revisions in 1993. Since that time, the home care industry has undergone significant changes. Today the industry treats many more people in their homes than it did ten years ago. It also provides services to a much more diverse population, thanks in part, to advances in medical technology. Services are provided to clients of all ages, and include everything from highly medically acute, to long-term care for people with diabetes, AIDS, Alzheimers, and cancer.

Last year licensure fees for home care, home health, and hospice agencies were raised by 20 percent. These fees reflect changes in survey practices and other regulatory activities performed by the department in response to the growth of the industry.

The industry has sought changes in the home care licensure law to make regulatory practices more efficient than current law permits.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Health is authorized to determine home care licensure fees based on the geographic area served, the number of locations, and volume of service provided.

The department is given authority to prorate licensure fees to facilitate combined inspections when the same entity has multiple licenses.

The definition of "branch office" is removed and replaced with the term "service area."

The department is directed to report to the health care committees of the Legislature by November 1999 with recommendations for any further changes needed to the licensure law. The department is directed to study certain areas to determine if additional enforcement tools are needed for public protection.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 27, 1999.

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

Testimony For: The changes in this bill are necessary to bring statutes in line with current practices.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Gary Bennett, DOH; Gail McGaffick, Washington Home Care Assn.; Blanche Jones, Olsten Health Services.

House Amendment(s): The amendment clarifies that the department rules concerning approval of an agency's service area are only related to assuring appropriate management and supervision of services in the service area, and that it is not the intent of the bill to expand or disallow the number or types of home health care services unless related to the need for trained and available staff.