

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5920

As Passed Senate, February 9, 2000

Title: An act relating to adding midwives to the definition of health care practitioners that provide women's health care services.

Brief Description: Including midwives in women's health care services.

Sponsors: Senators Costa, Thibaudeau, Deccio, Haugen and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/2/99, 3/3/99 [DP].
Passed Senate, 3/17/99, 44-0; 2/9/00, 47-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Jonathan Seib (786-7427)

Background: Under current law, health insurance plans must provide women with direct access to certain types of health care providers without requiring a prior referral from another provider. Licensed midwives are not among the list of providers to whom these direct access provisions apply.

Summary of Bill: Insurers must provide women with direct access to licensed midwives.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on March 1, 1999.

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

Testimony For: This bill does not expand the scope of practice of midwives. Rather, it puts midwives on a level playing field with other women's health care providers. The current system has led to substantial delays in women's access to midwives, causing delays in care that jeopardize both the health of the mother and the baby. A referral process is not necessary, and often the primary care provider is not familiar with the services that a midwife can provide.

Testimony Against: This bill would put limited license practitioners on the same level as general care practitioners with regard to direct access. It suggests a scope of practice that is not consistent with midwives' current scope of practice. Sufficient safeguards are not

always in place to assure a safe delivery absent the oversight that the referral process provides.

Testified: PRO: Nick Federici, Sarah Huntington, Lee Anne Shelley, Midwives Association of Washington State; CON: Carl Nelson, Washington State Medical Association.