

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5220

As Passed Senate, March 8, 2001

Title: An act relating to administration of a multiple sclerosis survey.

Brief Description: Surveying multiple sclerosis patients.

Sponsors: Senators Eide, Brown, West, Parlette, Thibaudeau, Patterson, Fairley and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/31/01, 2/8/01 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/8/01, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

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

Staff: Chelsea Buchanan (786-7446)

Background: The state of Washington's rate of multiple sclerosis (MS) is one of the highest in the nation. Some studies show that the rate of MS in the inland Northwest (including eastern Washington and northern Idaho) is the second highest in the world.

Multiple sclerosis is an unpredictable disease of the central nervous system, and can range from mildly to chronically disabling. MS is a disease in which the protective insulation (myelin) around nerve fibers is destroyed, which slows or blocks nerve function.

Research continues on the causes of the disease, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment and support methods. The MS Rehabilitation Research and Training Center at the University of Washington has surveyed a western Washington population that is primarily urban and close to medical and social support systems. There is a great degree of interest in expanding current research by conducting a survey that will focus on rural eastern Washington.

Summary of Bill: Funds are appropriated to the University of Washington to conduct a survey of eastern Washington State citizens who have MS. The University of Washington's Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, under the direction of Dr. George Kraft, administers the survey.

The survey must assess possible causal factors, characteristics of the disease, and the needs of this population and how they are being met.

Appropriation: \$50,000.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Washington's rate of MS is unique in the U.S. MS has a significant economic impact on the state in terms of health care and lost wages. A survey will help determine the state's needs around MS, helping to increase treatment rates, rehabilitative therapy, and other physical and social supports. A study will also allow exploration of access to care, quality of care, and quality of life issues. There is much more to treating MS than treating symptoms of disease. Washington's MS treatment centers struggle to meet expenses. MS is a unique disease that is difficult to diagnose and treat, and reimbursement rates for care are low, so MS patients are not popular– to treat, which may restrict access to services.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Dr. George Kraft, University of Washington (pro); Patty Shepherd-Barnes, National MS Society (pro); Robert Hansen, National MS Society (pro); James Bowen, University of Washington (pro).