

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5598

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 27, 2001

Title: An act relating to athletic trainers.

Brief Description: Certifying athletic trainers.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Roach, Horn, Swecker, Kohl-Welles, Thibaudeau, Franklin, Rasmussen, B. Sheldon, Eide, Costa, McAuliffe, Prentice and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/20/01, 2/27/01 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5598 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Chelsea Buchanan (786-7446)

Background: Athletic trainers are currently not regulated in the state. These individuals work under the supervision of a physical therapist or a physician in clinical settings, or they work autonomously or under the indirect supervision of a physician in interscholastic, amateur and professional sports settings. Their training is in the management of health problems associated with sports participation. These include, for example, treating injuries, developing strength and flexibility, reducing pain and swelling, and ongoing rehabilitation.

Nine colleges and universities around the state offer athletic trainer programs. Currently, there is a national independent certifying entity that reviews and regulates how athletic trainers prepare for and maintain competency in their profession.

In 1993, the Department of Health conducted a sunrise review of a proposal to license athletic trainers. It recommended no regulation.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Athletic trainers are regulated at the level of certification. No person may apply for certification without first receiving a baccalaureate or post graduate degree in a program approved by the Secretary of Health.

The Secretary of Health must establish standards for approval and revocation of educational programs. The secretary must establish date and location of examinations and equivalency standards for out-of-state applicants who seek certification without taking an exam. The exam is waived for out-of-state practitioners who can show they meet accepted standards of education and experience for the profession.

The secretary establishes by rule fees and requirements for renewal of a credential.

Athletic trainers are regulated under the state's Uniform Disciplinary Act.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The definitions in the bill are limited and simplified, to include only those items needed for certification. The Department of Health is authorized to develop rules for the number of times an applicant may take an examination before remedial education is required, rather than this being specified in statute. The substitute does not cover athletic trainers under the malpractice statute, as the intent is certification, not licensing of a new class of health care provider.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Athletic trainers have access to our youth and great responsibility; certifying them will increase public safety. Forty-three states have recognized this and have passed some type of regulating legislation. Parents and schools need to know that the athletic trainers they have hired have completed a recognized course of training and are qualified. Right now any person can represent themselves as an athletic trainer.

Testimony Against: The 1993 Department of Health sunrise review indicates there is no need to certify athletic trainers. This bill is unnecessary, and an updated sunrise review would be a more appropriate way of responding to safety concerns. **Concerns:** The definitions section and references to malpractice law seem to relate to licensing athletic trainers, rather than certification, which is confusing, since the intent of the bill is certification. The definitions of athletic injury and athletic training seem to overlap with the physical therapy scope of practice.

Testified: Senator Paull Shin, prime sponsor (pro); Senator Pam Roach, co-sponsor (pro); Jim Whitesel, Washington State Athletic Trainers Association (pro); Ingrid Fuhriman, mother and former PTA president (pro); Bill Slosson, River Ridge High School (pro); Brad Agerup, Washington State Athletic Trainers Association (pro); Mark A. Todd, Washington State Athletic Trainers Association (pro); Susan Chalcraft, Physical Therapy Association of Washington (concerns); Melissa Johnson, Physical Therapy Association of Washington (concerns); Carl Nelson, Washington State Medical Association (con); Jeff Larsen, WOMA (con).