

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5178

As of January 27, 2017

Title: An act relating to requiring the department of health to develop a hearing loss education program for health care professionals.

Brief Description: Requiring the department of health to develop a hearing loss education program for health care professionals.

Sponsors: Senators Bailey, Keiser and Conway.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health Care: 1/26/17.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Health to develop a hearing loss educational program for regulated health care professionals.
- Requires that the hearing loss educational program include components on how to recognize hearing loss in older adults such as being non-communicative and not responding to direct questions.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Staff: Kathleen Buchli (786-7488)

Background: Seventeen disciplinary authorities regulate health care professionals. The Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH) has authority over most of the health care professions including: midwives, mental health counselors, home care aids, and medical assistants. Sixteen health care professions are regulated by boards or commissions such as the Podiatric Medical Board, the Medical Quality Assurance Commission, and the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission. These disciplinary authorities have the authority to grant or deny licenses and may grant a license subject to conditions. Continuing education requirements are often required to be met as a condition for relicensing.

Summary of Bill: DOH must, in consultation with the disciplinary authorities, establish an ongoing hearing loss educational program as part of its regulation of health care professions. The program must train health care professionals in identifying hearing loss in older adults

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and must include symptoms of hearing loss, such as inappropriately responding to direct questions. This hearing loss educational program must be developed in collaboration with education programs that train students in the health professions. Disciplinary authorities may require that the hearing loss educational program be included into continuing competency programs, especially those programs that work with older adults or adults displaying symptoms of dementia.

A fee may be charged for participants who take the hearing loss educational program. The Health Professions Account may be used to fund the hearing loss educational program if the disciplining authority authorizes expenditures from the account.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: All health care workers need to be able to recognize the signs people display when they are suffering from hearing loss. They need to understand that their patients need to hear instructions and participate in their health care. You don't need to be a physician to identify hearing loss. Physicians need to know how to communicate with their patients. Not providing communication devices can negatively impact how people participate in their health care. Almost everyone by the age of 65 is impacted by hearing loss. I have personally observed how conflicting and confusing it can be to patients whose health care provider cannot communicate with them. This is an access to care issue. People need access to screening tools and referrals. Patients need to say what their needs are and providers need to understand how to communicate. Providers are not trained in hearing loss.

OTHER: It is unclear if these training requirements will be mandated and how many hours will be required. If this training is already covered in basic education for the profession, it should not be made a continuing education requirement. We are concerned about the costs and license fees being increased to pay for the costs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Barbara Bailey, Prime Sponsor; Cynthia Stewart, citizen; Kelly Tremblay, Hearing Loss Association of America; Alexandra Degroot, Hearing Ally; Cheri Perazzoli, Hearing Loss Association of America; Liz Tidyman, citizen.

OTHER: Leslie Emerick, ARNPs United, Home Care Association WA, Washington State Hospice-Palliative Care, Washington East Asian Medicine.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.