

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**2SSB 5239**

**AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 11, 1993**

**Brief Description:** Centralizing poison information services.

**SPONSORS:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wojahn, Prentice, Moyer, Deccio, Talmadge, Hargrove, Winsley, West and Erwin)

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5239 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Talmadge, Chairman; Wojahn, Vice Chairman; Deccio, Erwin, Franklin, Fraser, Hargrove, McAuliffe, McDonald, Moyer, Prentice, Quigley, Sheldon, L. Smith, and Winsley.

**Staff:** Scott Plack (786-7409)

**Hearing Dates:** January 26, 1993; February 4, 1993

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS**

**Majority Report:** That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5239 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Rinehart, Chairman; Spanel, Vice Chairman; Bauer, Bluechel, Cantu, Gaspard, Hargrove, Hochstatter, Jesernig, McDonald, Moyer, Pelz, Roach, Snyder, Sutherland, Talmadge, West, Williams, and Wojahn.

**Staff:** Cindi Holmstrom (786-7715)

**Hearing Dates:** March 3, 1993; March 4, 1993

**BACKGROUND:**

State law requires the Department of Health (DOH) to support a statewide program of poison and drug information services. The program is conducted through poison and drug information centers in Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma and Yakima. The centers, which are located in hospitals, provide emergency telephone assistance and treatment referral to victims of poison accidents and accidental exposures to toxic materials. They assess the patient, research the toxicity and exposure, determine appropriate management of the exposure situation, and provide treatment. The call volume to the centers exceeded 130,000 in 1992.

The state currently finances approximately 33 percent of the four centers' operating expenses (\$1,800,000 in the 91-93

biennium). The remaining amount comes from the host hospitals through in-kind contributions. The host hospitals have indicated that they are unable to continue to subsidize the program. In response, the Legislature directed the DOH to propose a plan of consolidation of the four centers into one center so that financial efficiencies could be obtained.

**SUMMARY:**

Legislative intent is clarified to emphasize the value of poison and toxic information centers in reducing health care costs by facilitating early intervention and treatment. The Secretary of the Department of Health (DOH) is required to consolidate the four existing poison and toxic information centers into one no later than June 30, 1993. The secretary is to decide the location of the consolidated center.

The responsibilities of the center are clarified and expanded. They include improving providing 24-hour emergency phone service, awareness of poison and overdose problems, occupation risks and environmental exposures and coordinating outreach units whose functions are to educate the public on poison and toxic exposure issues.

DOH is required to develop a system for consultation and coordination with other state and local agencies involved in poison and toxic issues. The center is authorized to receive gifts, grants and endowments. A redundant section of the law concerning the powers and duties of the centers is repealed.

The bill is made contingent on funding being provided by June 30, 1993.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** available

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

The poison information program saves lives and reduces medical costs by facilitating early medical intervention. Consolidation of poison information centers will reduce overall costs to the program. New funding sources need to be identified in order to assure continuation of the program.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** PRO: Bill Robertson, WA Poison Network; Lisa Thatcher, Group Health; Janet Griffith, DOH; Robb Menaul, WA State Hosp. Assn.; Mel Sorensen, Blue Cross; Susie Tracey, WSMA; Margaret Casey, The Children's Alliance; Jean Rennie; Stephen Bobbink, Children's Hospitality Med. Center; Lothar Pinkers, MD, Governor's Trauma Steering Committee; Janet Soohoo, The

Children's Alliance; Ruth Benfield, CHMC; Rick Wickman, Multi-Care