

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1837

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care & Wellness

Title: An act relating to directing the department of health to develop guidelines for the safety of individuals who rely upon stretchers and personal mobility devices.

Brief Description: Directing the department of health to develop guidelines for the transport of nonambulatory persons in a vehicle not licensed under chapter 18.73 RCW.

Sponsors: Representatives Newhouse, Cody and Schual-Berke.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 2/13/07, 2/26/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the use of non-ambulance vehicles to transport individuals in a stretcher when their personal mobility aid cannot be adequately secured in the vehicle.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Barlow, Campbell, Condotta, Curtis, Green, Moeller, Pedersen, Schual-Berke and Seaquist.

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

Ambulance services are licensed by the Department of Health (Department). Ambulance services must meet certain standards for their vehicles relating to personnel, equipment, and vehicle safety.

Patients who must be carried on a stretcher or who may require medical attention en route may only be transported by an ambulance. In 2005, the Legislature passed HB 1237

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(chapter 193) which specified that the term "stretcher" does not include personal mobility devices that are owned or leased for a period of at least one week.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

An exception to the prohibition on using non-ambulance vehicles to transport individuals who must be carried on a stretcher is made for people whose personal mobility aid cannot be adequately secured in the non-ambulance vehicle. The individual must have written authorization from a physician for the non-ambulance personnel to transfer the person from a personal mobility aid to a stretcher.

The Department must develop guidelines relating to appropriate situations for a non-ambulance vehicle to transport individuals who rely upon personal mobility aids and methods for properly securing personal mobility aids and determining whether or not they are adequately secured.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill removes the requirement that the Department adopt guidelines for the transportation of individuals in non-ambulance vehicles when being discharged from medical care and removes the pilot project on the same subject. The Department must develop guidelines to define appropriate situations for transporting individuals who rely upon personal mobility aids and methods for securing the devices.

The substitute bill replaces the authority for non-ambulance vehicles to transport people being discharged from medical care with the authority to transport individuals whose personal mobility aids cannot be adequately secured if the individual has written authorization from a physician that it is safe to transfer the person from a personal mobility aid to a stretcher.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 12, 2007.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill will enable certain people with disabilities to travel without having to rely upon ambulances for their transportation. This bill looks at the individual person's ability to travel, not the apparatus that they use. Other states already use these non-ambulance services. This bill will reduce the cost of transportation for both passengers and the public while providing quality transportation. Two years ago the Legislature exempted the personal mobility devices of people with disabilities from having to travel by ambulance so that they

have other transportation options, however, there have been challenges in securing these devices in the vehicles.

(Opposed) This bill is a threat to patient safety and emergency preparedness. It is not safe to allow patients being transported between medical facilities to travel in any vehicle other than an ambulance. Many things can go wrong when transporting frail individuals and they need appropriately staffed vehicles. This bill would reduce the availability of ambulances and trained emergency medical technicians in the event of an emergency. The reduced reimbursement level for ambulance providers in rural communities that would result from this bill could eliminate some of these ambulance services. It is in the best interest of patient care to provide trained people with the proper equipment to provide transports to patients.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Newhouse, prime sponsor; Brad Bergener and Clyde Southwick, Medstar Cabulance; and Toby Olson, Governor's Committee on Disability Issues.

(Opposed) Susie Tracey and Bob Berschauer, American Medical Response; William Woodlock, Washington Ambulance Association, Advanced Life Systems; Mike Ryherd, Joint Council of Teamsters, Teamsters Local 117; and Jeff Clark, Teamsters Local 763.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.