

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6296

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Health Care*

Title: An act relating to infant mortality reviews by local health departments.

Brief Description: Authorizing infant mortality reviews.

Sponsor(s): By Senators West, Niemi, Amondson, Stratton, Newhouse, M. Kreidler, Wojahn, Gaspard and Pelz.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Health Care, February 27, 1992, DPA.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HEALTH CARE**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 11 members: Representatives Braddock, Chair; Day, Vice Chair; Moyer, Ranking Minority Member; Casada, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cantwell; Edmondson; Franklin; Morris; Paris; Prentice; and Sprengle.

Staff: Bill Hagens (786-7131).

Background: Occurrences of infant mortality in Seattle and King County are a major concern of the public health and medical community of that area. To address this problem, the local health department has instituted an infant mortality review process to: understand the circumstances surrounding the infant deaths; identify factors contributing to the deaths; and identify effective interventions.

A major concern in the conduct of infant mortality reviews is the potentiality of inappropriate release of private medical records obtained through the review process. Such a pail could compromise researcher's ability to acquire complete and candid interview information.

Summary of Amended Bill: "Infant mortality review" is defined. All information and records obtained for an infant mortality review is deemed confidential and is protected from discovery and subpoena. Examination of any person involved in a review in any legal proceeding as to the existence or content of information relating to an infant

mortality review is proscribed. Requiring a local health department to release review data is prohibited. It is made clear that nothing in this bill affects existing child abuse and neglect reporting requirements.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Language is added to clarify that the provisions apply to those reviews authorized by local health departments. The definition of parent is clarified to include both adoptive and natural. Language is added to clarify that nothing in this bill affects existing child abuse and neglect reporting requirements.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The bill is needed to study the cause of infant mortality.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Elizabeth Ward, Department of Health (pro); Bea Kelleigh and Audrey Dickson, Seattle/King County Department of Health (pro); Fred Johnson, Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (pro); Diana Roberts, Department of Social and Health Services (pro); Dr. Barbara Andersen, Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners (pro); and Beverly Jacobson, Washington State Hospital Association (pro).