

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5241

AS PASSED SENATE, MARCH 4, 1991

**Brief Description:** Providing for public hospital district chaplains.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Newhouse, Vognild, Hayner, Gaspard, McCaslin and McMullen.

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE**

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators West, Chairman; L. Smith, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Johnson, and Wojahn.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass.

Signed by Senators L. Kreidler and Niemi.

**Staff:** Martin Lovinger (786-7443)

**Hearing Dates:** February 5, 1991; February 7, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

Currently public hospital districts have broad powers to make contracts, employ staff and do all other things necessary to operate hospitals. However, current law makes no explicit provision for the hiring of chaplains by public hospital districts.

**SUMMARY:**

Chaplains may be employed by public hospital districts.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** none requested

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

No clear statutory authority exists to employ chaplains. Spiritual advice is frequently requested and may be required for hospitals which receive certain federal funds.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:**

The state Constitution prohibits using public funds to support religious activities.

**TESTIFIED:** Greg Vigdor, Washington State Hospital Association  
(pro); Jerry Sheehan, American Civil Liberties Union (con)