

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6170

AS OF FEBRUARY 10, 1992

Brief Description: Providing a funding source for the long-term care ombudsman program.

SPONSORS: Senators L. Smith, West, Amondson, A. Smith, Roach, M. Kreidler, Moore, Johnson, Talmadge and Oke

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Martin Lovinger (786-7443)

Hearing Dates: January 30, 1992; February 6, 1992

BACKGROUND:

The long-term care ombudsman program was established to help protect the interests of long-term care residents. It receives funding from the federal government under the Older Americans Act and from the state general fund through the Department of Community Development. The funds pay for a professional staff which recruits and trains volunteers to act as local ombudsmen for the residents of the state's many long-term care facilities. However, only about 23 percent of long-term care residents have access to a volunteer ombudsman. Some counties have no local program at all. Although all residents have access to the two professional staff in the state office via the 800 telephone number, it is felt that the program will operate at its best when each facility in the state is assigned a specific volunteer ombudsman who can make regular and frequent visits.

The program is achieving some of its goals as evidenced by the number of long-term care residents who use its services. It is felt that the utilization would increase substantially if each facility had a local ombudsman.

SUMMARY:

A surcharge of \$1 per month is imposed on each bed in each nursing home licensed in this state. A surcharge of 50 cents per month is imposed on each bed in each boarding home and each adult family home licensed in this state. The money collected is to be deposited in the long-term care ombudsman account which is created in the State Treasury to support the long-term care ombudsman program.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: yes

Fiscal Note: available

TESTIMONY FOR:

This bill provides funds for counties that have no ombudsman program. It also provides funds where the ombudsman program is underfunded. Many nursing home problems could be avoided if there was access to an ombudsman. This program saves homes a lot of money by solving problems. The ombudsman program can prevent high turnover of employees. The volunteer ombudsman program is a good deal.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

The ombudsman program is good but should be funded by the state instead of by bleeding dry the system of nursing, boarding and adult family homes. Under this bill the tax will be borne by the private pay resident.

TESTIFIED: PRO: Wyoma E. May, Senior Services of Washington; Irene L. Robbins, Alzheimer's Association of Puget Sound; Evan Iverson, Senior Citizens Lobby; Hilke Faber, Washington State Nursing Home Resident Councils; Jackie Coombs, Washington State Nursing Home Resident Councils; Edward Saftich, Advisory Council for Area Aging Agency; Thomas Dorton, Seniors for Legislative Action; Sigrid Van Tongeran, Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, Longview; Evyonne Zandi, Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, Wahkiakum County; Charles McMurlin, State Legislative Coordinator for AARP; Nancy Baer, Long-Term Care Advisory Board, Auburn General Hospital; Dan Fruichante, Dessie Erb, Millie Gray, Charlie Lewis, Pierce County Resident Council; Amy Hansen, Washington State Nursing Home Resident Councils; CON: Karen Tynes, Director, Washington Association of Homes for the Aging; Scott Sigmon, Washington Health Care Association