

SENATE BILL REPORT

HJR 4200

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES,
MARCH 23, 1993

Brief Description: Amending the Constitution to permit municipalities and state agencies to employ chaplains.

SPONSORS: Representatives Franklin, Zellinsky, Campbell and Kremen

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Talmadge, Chairman; Deccio, Franklin, McAuliffe, McDonald, Moyer, Prentice, Quigley, and Winsley.

Minority Report: Do not pass as amended.

Signed by Senator Niemi.

Staff: Martin Lovinger (786-7443)

Hearing Dates: March 22, 1993; March 23, 1993

BACKGROUND:

The State Constitution prohibits the use of public money or property for any religious worship, exercise or instruction, or the support of any religious establishment. However, the state is not prohibited from employing a chaplain for state custodial, correctional, and mental institutions.

SUMMARY:

The Legislature is authorized to permit counties and public hospital districts to employ chaplains at their hospitals, health facilities, and hospices.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENTS:

State hospitals, state health care facilities and state hospices are added to the list of facilities for which the Legislature could authorize the employment of a chaplain.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

Effective Date: The amendment becomes effective immediately upon certification of the election results of the November 1993 general election, if the voters approve the amendment.

TESTIMONY FOR:

Chaplains enhance the healing process and assist dying individuals and their families in coping. The intent is to meet the spiritual needs of patients in a timely manner. Chaplain use is widespread in other societal institutions. Chaplains help educate staff as to issues of cultural sensitivity. Volunteer chaplains are not sufficient due to issue of timeliness.

TESTIMONY AGAINST:

Chaplain services should be provided by volunteers to avoid the appearance of entanglement of church and state. The State Constitution should not be tinkered with lightly. Guidance should be obtained from the Washington Supreme Court to see if this is necessary.

TESTIFIED: PRO: Senator Franklin; Greg Vigdor, WA State Hospital Assn.; John Underreiner, Evergreen Hospital Medical Center and King County Public Hospital District #2; Susie Tracy, University Medical Center; CON: Jerry Sheehan, ACLU