

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 1827

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Health & Long-Term Care, April 2, 2003

**Title:** An act relating to provision of meningococcal immunization information to first-time students by degree-granting postsecondary educational institutions.

**Brief Description:** Requiring information on meningitis immunization for college students.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Moeller, Skinner, Fromhold, Schoesler, Romero, Sullivan, Hankins, Hunt, Morrell, Delvin, Cox, Kenney, Hinkle, Linville, Wood, Cody, Dunshee, Schual-Berke, Sehlin and Simpson).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 4/1/03, 4/2/03 [DPA].

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

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Winsley, Vice Chair; Brandland, Franklin, Keiser, Parlette and Thibaudeau.

**Staff:** Tanya Karwaki (786-7447)

**Background:** Meningitis is a bacterial infection causing inflammation of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord. Meningococcal bacteria are transmitted through the air via respiratory secretions and direct contact with infected persons. Common symptoms of meningitis, which can be treated with antibiotics, include high fever, headache, and stiff neck. The disease can result in permanent brain damage, hearing loss, learning disability, limb amputation, kidney failure, or death. A vaccine is available that provides protection against meningitis for approximately three to five years.

The American College Health Association estimates that 100 to 125 cases of meningitis occur annually on college campuses, resulting in five to 15 student deaths. Studies indicate that college freshmen, especially those living dormitories, have a six times higher risk for meningitis than college students overall. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that college freshmen be educated about the availability of a safe and effective vaccine which can decrease their risk of contracting the disease.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** Except for community and technical colleges, every degree-granting postsecondary residential campus that provides on-campus or group housing provides information on meningitis to each matriculated, first-time student. Community and technical colleges must only provide the information to those students offered on-campus or group housing. The information must include symptoms, risks, and treatment of the disease, as well as information about the vaccination and where the vaccine can be received. Neither the Department of Health nor the education institution are required to vaccinate the students. The

Department of Health must be consulted regarding preparing the information materials. The act does not create a private right of action.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The striker reinserts the language of SSB 5828. All enrolled, matriculated, first-time students must be given information on meningitis. There is an exception for community and technical colleges, which must only provide the information to those students offered on-campus or group housing. There is no requirement that the information be placed on the housing application and the bill does not create a private right of action.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on July 1, 2004.

**Testimony For:** This bill requires little extra of the colleges and universities other than placing the information regarding meningitis on the housing applications. By putting the information on the housing forms, the students will understand the importance of the issue.

**Testimony Against:** The striker is preferable because it will result in better information reaching the students. The housing applications only cover a portion of the student population, not all incoming students. The striker requires information to be given to all incoming students and permits flexibility with respect to the location of the information.

**Testified:** Mandy Feretz, Washington Student Lobby (pro); Melanie Stewart, Washington Osteopathic Medical Association (pro); Judy McNickle, Western Washington University (pro striker/con bill); Jane Young Dennie, Washington State University (pro striker/con bill); Tom Woodnutt, SBCTC (pro striker/con bill).