

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5966

As Passed Senate, March 16, 2003

Title: An act relating to increasing the supply of dentists to meet the critical shortage of dental providers in this state and underserved areas.

Brief Description: Increasing the supply of dentists to meet the critical shortage of dental providers in this state and underserved areas.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Deccio and Winsley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/5/03 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 3/16/03, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5966 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Staff: Tanya Karwaki (786-7447)

Background: There is concern that there is a shortage of dental providers in Washington hindering access to dental care. It is estimated that half of all practicing dentists will retire over the next decade. The University of Washington School of Dentistry is one of only eight dental schools in the western United States, and the only nearby school for dental students living in Alaska, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming.

There is also concern that licensing restrictions discourage dental providers from coming into this state to practice.

Summary of Bill: The Washington State Dental Quality Assurance Commission no longer must determine that another state's licensing standards are substantively equivalent to the standards in Washington. Rather, a dentist licensed in another state may be granted a Washington license without examination if he or she is a graduate of a dental school approved by the commission under current law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill removes barriers that prevent dentists from other states from practicing in Washington.

Testimony Against: The original bill was problematic because of the sections regarding dental hygienists.

Testified: Melissa Johnson, WA State Dental Hygienists Assn. (con original); Linda Hull, Washington State Dental Assn. (pro); Major Mike Behnen, U.S. Army Dental Corps (pro); Patty Hayes, DOH (pro sub).