
SENATE BILL 5421

State of Washington

58th Legislature

2003 Regular Session

By Senators B. Sheldon, Fraser, Thibaudeau, Kline, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen

Read first time 01/24/2003. Referred to Committee on Health & Long-Term Care.

1 AN ACT Relating to newborn hearing screening; adding a new section
2 to chapter 70.83 RCW; and creating a new section.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature makes the following
5 findings:

6 (1) Hearing loss is the number one birth disorder in the United
7 States;

8 (2) Every day, thirty-three babies leave the hospital with some
9 degree of hearing loss;

10 (3) All children can be evaluated for hearing loss, even children
11 who are only minutes old, using a safe and painless test that is easy
12 to administer;

13 (4) Undetected hearing loss present from an early age significantly
14 impairs speech, language, cognitive, and social-emotional development;

15 (5) Screening of newborns for early hearing loss would provide
16 personal and financial benefits to the hearing-impaired individual and
17 to society through reductions in the support network costs for hearing-
18 impaired students and adults;

1 (6) The majority of states have adopted policies or mandates
2 supporting early hearing detection; and

3 (7) The Washington state board of health has recommended adding
4 screening for early hearing loss to the current newborn screening
5 requirements.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 70.83 RCW
7 to read as follows:

8 The department of health shall require a hearing screening of all
9 newborn infants before they are discharged from the hospital. However,
10 no screening shall be provided to any newborn infant whose parent or
11 guardian objects upon the grounds that a hearing screening conflicts
12 with their religious tenets and practices.

13 Audiologists, clinicians, attending physicians, or other persons
14 performing the screening shall report the results of the screening to
15 the department of health.

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