

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2835

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care & Wellness

Title: An act relating to creating a purple card alert system.

Brief Description: Creating a public information system regarding people with dementia.

Sponsors: Representatives Tharinger, Cody, Johnson, Harris, Appleton, Fey, Kilduff and Goodman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 2/3/16, 2/5/16 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to utilize the structure of the state Alzheimer's plan to address the creation and promotion of voluntary information systems to help the community accommodate and interact with individuals with dementia and the individuals' caregivers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Riccelli, Vice Chair; Schmick, Ranking Minority Member; Harris, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Clibborn, DeBolt, Jinkins, Johnson, Moeller, Robinson, Rodne, Short, Tharinger and Van De Wege.

Staff: Ariele Landstrom (786-7190).

Background:

Dementia is a term that can describe a number of symptoms, including impairment of: memory; communication and language; ability to focus and pay attention; reasoning and judgment; and visual perception. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, representing 60 to 80 percent of dementia cases. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) estimates that by 2025, 150,000 individuals in Washington will have

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Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. In 2011 federal law established the National Alzheimer's Project to create a national plan to overcome Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, including expanding supports for caregivers and enhancing public awareness and engagement. In 2014 legislation was enacted at the state level to develop an Alzheimer's Disease Plan for Washington by January 1, 2016.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

"Dementia" is defined as a chronic or persistent disorder of the mental processes caused by a brain disease or injury and marked by memory disorders, personality changes, and impaired reasoning.

The DSHS, as an integral part to the development and implementation of the state Alzheimer's plan, must work to ensure that the following considerations regarding a purple card information system are addressed as part of the plan's next generation Alzheimer's disease and dementia advisory group: (1) development of a purple-colored card with information indicating that the companion of the person giving the card is asking the receiver of the card to be understanding and accommodating to the person with dementia. The advisory group should also consider if there are similar cards available through community organizations; (2) creation and implementation of a public information plan to alert first responders, government officials, businesses, and others in the community of the purple card information system to advise individuals of their potential interaction with a person with dementia and recommendations for accommodating and assisting the person with dementia, while also increasing awareness about other information or alert systems available to ensure safety and quick return of adults who wander; (3) investigation of rights and issues surrounding privacy and exploitation; and (4) development and implementation of a plan for voluntary cooperation by local, state, tribal, and government agencies, radio and television stations, cable and satellite systems, newspapers and other publications, and businesses to enhance the public's ability to assist people with dementia and to advise others who interact with persons with dementia of the need to accept and accommodate the person with dementia.

Organizations are not precluded from developing a card or promoting the awareness of the use of cards to assist individuals with dementia, unpaid caregivers, first responders, or others in the community.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill, instead of creating a new advisory group and requiring more immediate action for creation and implementation of the purple card alert system, utilizes the existing structure of the state Alzheimer's plan to address the creation and promotion of voluntary information systems to: (1) help first responders, businesses, government officials, and others in the community to be aware that the individual they are interacting with has special needs related to dementia; and (2) assist unpaid caregivers when taking an individual with dementia into the community. The DSHS is required to work to ensure that the elements of

these information systems are addressed in the state Alzheimer's plan's next generation Alzheimer's disease and dementia advisory group.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There are struggles and challenges with dementia. Communicating with strangers, store clerks, and service people can be difficult for people with dementia and their caregivers. Being able to hand a person a card that says a companion has memory problems discreetly communicates sensitive information without the caregiver having to give a verbal explanation. It allows the receiver of the card to be accommodating, understanding, and patient and gives the receiver a heads up that the person may need special consideration. Maintaining the dignity of a person with dementia is very important. Presenting the card maintains the self-respect of the person with dementia and alleviates the need for conversation that could possibly be embarrassing or hurtful. . This inexpensive alert system would be helpful to first responders. Once the card becomes commonplace, the color alone would give law enforcement or first responders some important information. Caregivers need to be able to navigate in their communities while accompanying people with dementia. It is reasonable and responsible that the caregivers be able to give contacts information in a subtle and courteous manner to make interaction easier.

DSHS has raised some issues about this. There are items that could be tweaked in the legislation.

This bill speaks for itself. The DSHS could probably do this on its own, but a legislative nudge is helpful. This would remove the stigma that people with dementia face in the community. This will help caregivers take their loved ones out into the community and encourage others to be more accepting of the challenges they are facing.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Tharinger, prime sponsor; Madeleine Fraley; Gary Smith; and Jerry Reilly, Elder Care Alliance.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.