

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2458

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Health Care & Wellness

**Title:** An act relating to developing a short form for death certificates.

**Brief Description:** Requiring the department of health to adopt rules establishing an abbreviated death certificate.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hayes and Goodman.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Health Care & Wellness: 1/17/18, 1/23/18 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Directs the Department of Health to establish rules regarding the content and release of an abbreviated death certificate that does not include the decedent's cause of death, Social Security number, or parents' names.
- Allows abbreviated death certificates to be used in any instance in which a government agency requires the submission of a death certificate, but the cause of death is not material to the filing.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Macri, Vice Chair; Schmick, Ranking Minority Member; Graves, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Clibborn, DeBolt, Harris, Jinkins, MacEwen, Maycumber, Riccelli, Robinson, Rodne, Slatter, Stonier and Tharinger.

**Staff:** Chris Blake (786-7392).

**Background:**

The Department of Health (Department) operates a state vital records system for registering births, deaths, fetal deaths, marriages, divorce decrees, annulments, and separations. The

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vital records system must collect items recommended for collection by the federal government. Death certificates must include identifying information about the deceased person, the time and place of death, the circumstances and cause of death, and information about the person certifying the death. The Department and local registrars may issue certified copies of death certificates for deaths that occurred in Washington.

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**Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Department of Health must establish rules regarding the content and release of an abbreviated death certificate that includes identifying information about the decedent and information about the fact of the person's death, but excludes information related to the cause of death, the Social Security number, and the names of the decedent's parents. In cases in which a government agency requires the submission of a death certificate, the agency must recognize the use of the abbreviated death certificate if the cause of a person's death is not material to the filing.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill specifies that the Department of Health's rules must relate to the content and release of abbreviated death certificates. The reference to the instances in which a death certificate must be "filed" with a government agency is removed, although the reference to where the death certificate must be "provided" to an agency is retained. Grammatical changes are made.

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**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) This bill is about identity theft which can come from the information currently on the full death certificate. Death certificates are frequently required to be filed with the government. Death certificates have a lot of personal information that is not pertinent to what the death certificate is used for such as Social Security number, place of birth, and parents' names. The amount of information raises concerns about identity theft and identity fraud. While the information that this bill would remove from the death certificate may be convenient to have, in the vast majority of cases the information is not necessary. This bill does not do away with the standard form death certificate, but just gives citizens an option if they would like to keep their information private.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Hayes, prime sponsor; and Greg Gilday.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.