

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6058

As of January 14, 2020

Title: An act relating to fire district health clinic services.

Brief Description: Concerning fire district health clinic services.

Sponsors: Senators Randall, Saldaña, Wilson, C., Hunt and Kuderer.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Local Government: 1/14/20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the authority of fire protection districts to establish and participate in providing health clinic services to all fire protection districts.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Staff: Greg Vogel (786-7413)

Background: A fire protection district is a type of special purpose district created to provide fire prevention, fire suppression, and emergency medical services within a district's boundaries. Districts serve residents outside of cities or towns, except when cities and towns have been annexed into a district or when the district continues to provide service to a newly incorporated area.

A district has the powers and authorities of a municipal corporation and is generally managed by a board of commissioners. Districts finance their activities and facilities by imposing regular property taxes, excess voter-approved property tax levies, and benefit charges.

In addition to providing fire prevention services, fire suppression services, emergency medical services, and services for protecting life and property, the following two fire protection districts are also authorized to establish and participate in providing health clinic services: Whatcom County Fire District, located in Point Roberts, and South Kitsap Fire and Rescue, located in Port Orchard.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: All fire protection districts are authorized to establish and participate in providing health clinic services.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 2020.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The 26th district, like other rural and semi-rural districts, is experiencing a shortage in access to health care. People are not always able to easily access healthcare because of the distance to clinics and lack of public transportation network. The district is looking to expand a partnership with other health care providers in order to provide people care when they need it. The current version of the bill is permissive statewide, but there have been conversations with other stakeholders about narrowing the scope.

This problem has been previously addressed in legislation for districts in 2003 and 2005. There is a huge impact with community members calling 911 as their regular service. This solution is about finding a way to meet the need for doctors and other health care practitioners. Since those districts have opened clinic services, there have not been any huge problems, and neither district is operating out of their scope of allowable powers. Following a survey, this option was very close to being approved by a super majority of fire districts.

CON: There is a primary mission, driven in statute, authorizing public hospital districts to provide health care services. There are 56 of those districts statewide. Fire districts were created for fire suppression and fire prevention activities. There is uncertainty as to what this bill would open up. If there are pockets of areas that need this authorization, then that may be something that can be discussed, but the bill in its current form causes concern for unintended consequences.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Emily Randall, Prime Sponsor; Wayne Senter, Washington Fire Chiefs; Dustin Morrow, Key Penn Fire Department.

CON: Lisa Thatcher, Association of Public Hospital Districts.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.