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**HOUSE BILL 2466**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Fosse, Bronoske, and Bateman

AN ACT Relating to addressing ambulance wait times for patient transfer from emergency medical services to hospital staff; amending RCW 70.168.020; and adding a new section to chapter 70.41 RCW.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 70.41 RCW to read as follows:

(1)(a) Beginning December 1, 2025, a hospital with an emergency department shall accept care for a patient that has been transported to the hospital in an ambulance within 30 minutes of the ambulance arriving at the hospital, unless an exception applies.

(b) If the hospital does not accept care for a patient in 30 minutes or less, and an exception does not apply, the hospital shall reimburse the ambulance service for the ambulance's additional waiting time in accordance with reimbursement rates set by the department based on the Washington state wage and equipment rate guide.

(c) Exceptions to the requirements included in (a) and (b) of this subsection do not include reduced emergency department capacity due to hospital staffing, but do include:

(i) Periods of patient surge due to the activation of a disaster medical control center; and

(ii) Periods of reduced emergency department capacity due to temporary, unforeseen damage or disruptions to the emergency department, such as water damage or system outages.

(2) By December 1, 2025, the department, in consultation with the emergency medical services and trauma care steering committee, shall establish requirements regarding:

(a) Protocols to be implemented by hospitals and ambulance services for recording the time of the ambulance's arrival at the hospital and the time that the transfer of care to the hospital occurs;

(b) Exceptions for when ambulance waiting time may exceed 30 minutes without requiring reimbursement by the hospital; and

(c) Reimbursement rates for ambulance waiting time exceeding 30 minutes, based on the Washington state wage and equipment rate guide.

(3) Nothing in this section prohibits a hospital that does not have the capability to treat a specific medical condition from transferring a patient to a hospital with specialized capabilities in accordance with state and federal law.

(4) The department may adopt rules to implement this section.

(5) For the purposes of this section, "ambulance service" means an organization that operates one or more ambulances.

**Sec.**  RCW 70.168.020 and 2011 1st sp.s. c 21 s 28 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) There is hereby created an emergency medical services and trauma care steering committee composed of representatives of individuals knowledgeable in emergency medical services and trauma care, including emergency medical providers such as physicians, nurses, hospital personnel, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, ambulance services, a member of the emergency medical services licensing and certification advisory committee, local government officials, state officials, consumers, and persons affiliated professionally with health science schools. The secretary shall appoint members of the steering committee. Members shall be appointed for a period of three years. The department shall provide administrative support to the committee. All appointive members of the committee, in the performance of their duties, may be entitled to receive travel expenses as provided in RCW 43.03.050 and 43.03.060. The secretary may remove members from the committee who have three unexcused absences from committee meetings. The secretary shall fill any vacancies of the committee in a timely manner. The terms of those members representing the same field shall not expire at the same time.

The committee shall elect a chair and a vice chair whose terms of office shall be for one year each. The chair shall be ineligible for reelection after serving four consecutive terms.

The committee shall meet on call by the secretary or the chair.

(2) The emergency medical services and trauma care steering committee shall:

(a) Advise the department regarding emergency medical services and trauma care needs throughout the state.

(b) Review the regional emergency medical services and trauma care plans and recommend changes to the department before the department adopts the plans.

(c) Review proposed departmental rules for emergency medical services and trauma care.

(d) Recommend modifications in rules regarding emergency medical services and trauma care.

(e) Consult with the department regarding requirements for recording and reimbursing ambulance waiting time in accordance with section 1 of this act.

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