

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1824

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, March 20, 2025

Title: An act relating to inspections for accredited birthing centers.

Brief Description: Concerning inspections for accredited birthing centers.

Sponsors: House Committee on Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representative Barnard).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/4/25, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 3/18/25, 3/20/25 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes that a birthing center accredited by a birthing center accrediting body is not subject to a state licensure survey if certain conditions are met.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Cleveland, Chair; Orwall, Vice Chair; Muzzall, Ranking Member; Bateman, Chapman, Christian, Harris, Holy, Riccelli, Robinson and Slatter.

Staff: Julie Tran (786-7283)

Background: Birthing centers provide care before, during, and after delivery to low-risk mothers-to-be. Birthing centers include accommodations and staff to support the birthing process, and they are owned and operated by licensed midwives and certified nurse midwives. A birthing center must be licensed by the Department of Health (DOH), and licensure requirements are established by DOH in rule.

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

DOH is required to conduct inspections and investigations of birthing centers. As part of the initial licensure process, DOH conducts a survey to determine if the applicant meets all applicable licensing requirements. Birthing center licenses must be renewed annually, and DOH may inspect and investigate each birthing center every 24 months or as needed to determine compliance with DOH requirements.

Summary of Bill: A birthing center accredited by a birthing center accrediting body (accrediting body) is not subject to a state licensure survey if:

- DOH determines that the applicable survey standards of the accrediting body are substantially equivalent to those in statutes and in rules adopted by DOH;
- an on-site survey has been conducted for the purposes of accreditation during the previous 36 months; and
- DOH receives copies of the latest survey report and other relevant reports or findings that indicate compliance with licensure requirements.

DOH has the authority to survey any service areas that are not addressed by the accrediting body.

In reviewing the accrediting body's survey standards for substantial equivalency, DOH is required to provide the most liberal interpretation consistent with its duties. If DOH determines at any time that the accrediting body's survey standards are not substantially equivalent to its own standards, DOH is required to notify affected licensees and the notification must contain a detailed description of the deficiencies in the alternative survey process and an explanation of the consumer risk.

DOH is authorized to perform a validation survey on applicants who previously received a survey by the accrediting body, but the DOH may not perform a validation survey on more than 10 percent of applicants that are accredited by the accrediting body.

Requirements regarding inspections of accredited birthing centers do not affect DOH's initial licensing process or enforcement authority.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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 national accrediting body exceeds the requirements set by DOH. Studies show that birthing centers provide positive impacts on health outcomes such as decreasing maternal mortality and infant prematurity and nearly eliminating racial disparities in health outcomes for those who initiate birth care in these

accredited freestanding birth centers. Supporting this bill acknowledges this excellence in care as a standard for safety and wellness in our state. This bill also supports inspections be done in a timely manner. There are current redundancies in the accrediting and state licensure processes and this bill eliminates some of the duplicative processes and also, it saves money for the birthing centers and DOH. This bill has no fiscal impact and can save the state money. Birthing centers do not have a lot of administrative staff and these processes can be onerous.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Stephanie Barnard, Prime Sponsor; Cynthia Flynn, Washington Association of Birth Centers; Carolee Hall, Washington Association of Birth Centers.

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