

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5244

As of January 22, 2025

Title: An act relating to providing an exemption for women, infants, and children program staff to perform hematological screening tests.

Brief Description: Providing an exemption for women, infants, and children program staff to perform hematological screening tests.

Sponsors: Senators Riccelli, Bateman, Nobles, Saldaña and Wilson, C.; by request of Department of Health.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 1/23/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows program staff members, who are working at a Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program clinic and administering hematological screening tests and evaluations, from being required to register or certify as medical assistants.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Julie Tran (786-7283)

Background: Medical Assistants. The Department of Health (DOH) issues certifications and registrations for several different types of medical assistants such as certified medical assistants, registered medical assistants, medical assistant-hemodialysis technicians, medical assistant-phlebotomists, medical assistant-EMTs, and forensic phlebotomists.

Washington State Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program. The Washington State Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program (WIC) has over 200 clinics across the state and WIC provides services to low-income pregnant people, new and breast and chest

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feeding parents, infants, and children up to age five. Those services include: nutrition education; breast and chest feeding support; healthy foods; and health screenings and referrals.

Federal regulations requires individuals participating in the WIC program to be screened for iron deficiency anemia. The hemoglobin screening can be done using a finger-, heel-, or toe-stick blood test. This screening helps identify individuals at risk for iron deficiency anemia, which can have significant health risks for infants and pregnant people.

According to DOH, approximately 35 percent of Washington State WIC participants—which is about 45,000 participants—do not have equal access to the required screenings for anemia.

Currently, staff must be registered as medical assistants and have a healthcare practitioner oversight to perform the screening test. Some WIC clinics cannot conduct the screening test because they do not have a healthcare practitioner available to oversee the test.

Summary of Bill: An exemption is provided for WIC staff members who are administering hematological screening tests and evaluations via heel-, toe-, or finger-stick sampling from being required to register or certify as medical assistants.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 14, 2025.

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

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