
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5823

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Senate Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Cortes, Hasegawa, and Valdez)

READ FIRST TIME 02/04/26.

1 AN ACT Relating to patient advocates; and adding a new section to
2 chapter 70.41 RCW.

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

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 70.41
5 RCW to read as follows:

6 (1) On or before January 1, 2027, hospitals licensed under this
7 chapter must have at least one person who is physically present every
8 day in the acute care setting who may assist patients to navigate the
9 health care system on behalf of the patient. Patient advocacy
10 services and duties outlined in subsection (4) of this section may be
11 provided by more than one person.

12 (2) The requirement outlined in subsection (1) of this section
13 does not apply to:

14 (a) Rural hospitals certified by the centers for medicare and
15 medicaid services as independent sole community hospitals or critical
16 access hospitals;

17 (b) Hospitals located on an island operating within a public
18 hospital district in Skagit county; and

19 (c) Hospitals that are not currently designated as a critical
20 access hospital, do not meet current federal eligibility requirements
21 for designation as a critical access hospital, have combined medicaid

1 and medicare inpatient days greater than 60 percent of all hospital
2 inpatient days, and are located on the land of a federally recognized
3 Indian tribe.

4 (3) On or before January 1, 2027, hospitals that are exempt under
5 subsection (2) of this section must provide patients with access to a
6 patient advocate, which may be provided as contact information for a
7 patient advocacy service, including a telephone or videoconference
8 number. The hospital must verify those services are active and
9 familiar with Washington health systems. The hospital must also share
10 with the patient how to provide the patient advocate access to any
11 necessary information including, but not limited to, medical records
12 of the patient.

13 (4) People with patient advocate duties must assist patients
14 within the acute care hospital by supporting the patient as the
15 patient is navigating the health care system. The patient advocate
16 may provide patients with assistance with the following services that
17 include, but are not limited to:

18 (a) Accessing and obtaining their medical records;

19 (b) Scheduling appointments and follow-up treatment plans and
20 treatment visits;

21 (c) Collaborating with the health care team of the patients to
22 provide the patients with better understanding of their medical
23 condition, treatment options, and other care-related questions; and

24 (d) Representing the interest of the patients by asking
25 questions, writing down information, and supporting patients with
26 their communication with health care providers, insurance companies,
27 and hospitals.

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