



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

February 8, 2005

The Honorable Karen Keiser
Washington State Senator
Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee Chair
338 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40433
Olympia, WA 98504-0433

Dear Senator Keiser:

I am writing as chair of the Washington State Board of Health to share the Board's support for the concept of Senate Bill 5650 and to recommend amendment. The bill, which is scheduled to be heard before your committee tomorrow, concerns food safety training for employees of adult family homes.

Chapter 69.06 RCW requires that people who are paid to handle unwrapped and unpackaged foods obtain a food worker card. The Board writes the rules for food service workers and has a longstanding interest in assuring that adult family home workers are getting appropriate training on basic food handling practices in order to protect the health and safety of residents.

The proposed legislation would ensure that workers in adult family homes get 30 minutes of food safety training consistent with the standards established by the Board in Chapter 246-217 WAC through the existing Department of Social and Health Services' (DSHS) training and continuing education program. If they successfully complete the training, they would not be required to obtain a food worker card. Incorporating the Board's food handler training into an existing DSHS training program minimizes any duplication of effort while continuing to provide workers with the necessary food handler education that will encourage the best protection against food-borne illnesses in adult family homes.


I do, however, have some concerns about the bill that could be addressed easily through amendments:

- The bill would create a conflict between Chapter 70.128 RCW, which would exempt adult family home workers, and Chapter 69.06 RCW, which requires them to have food worker cards.
- The bill is not clear as to whether successfully completing a curriculum that meets standards required by the Board would mean that participants must pass a test approved by the Department of Health (DOH) as currently required under WAC 246-217-025(5).

- Workers have 120 days to complete the DSHS curriculum, which leaves open the possibility they might be handling food without proper safety training for nearly four months.

Board staff members have been consulting with DOH and DSHS on amendments that would strengthen this legislation. DOH will be presenting the sponsor and the committee with specific language that would clarify testing requirements, require the employer to provide new workers with information about safe food handling practices, and amend Chapter 69.06 RCW. The Board supports this bill with the DOH amendments.

Sincerely,



Thomas Locke, MD, MPH
Chair, Washington State Board of Health

cc: The Honorable Pat Thibaudeau
The Honorable Richard Curtis
Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee Members
Ms. Christina Hulet, Governor's Office of Health Policy
Ms. Chris Townley, Department of Health
Washington State Board of Health Members
Mr. Craig McLaughlin, State Board of Health