

**SFA**

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Fiscal Agency

• Lansing, Michigan 48909

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House Bill 4807 (as reported without amendment)

Sponsor: Representative Michael J. Bennane

House Committee: Public Health

Senate Committee: Health Policy

Date Completed: 12-4-89

**RATIONALE**

Having dentures that are readily identifiable is helpful in two disparate situations: disasters in which bodies might be unidentifiable (such as auto accidents, fires, plane crashes, and boat sinkings) and institutional settings in which people may displace their dentures. In mass disasters involving fire, for example, difficulties often arise in identifying the bodies of victims that have been burned beyond recognition. Even badly burned bodies can be identified through dental work, which is highly individualized. In the case of burn victims who were wearing dentures, however, dental identification is extremely difficult, since one denture often is like another. Easily identifiable dentures also can be helpful in the nursing home setting where patients may misplace their dentures. Having patients' dentures marked would help nursing home staffs match dentures that they find in the facility with the patient who misplaced them. Some people believe that requiring the marking of dentures and orthodontic appliances would aid in the identification of disaster victims and would be of benefit to nursing home patients suffering from dementia.

**CONTENT**

The bill would amend the Public Health Code to require, unless a patient specifically declined, that a dentist or dental laboratory permanently mark the patient's name or Social Security number, whichever the patient chose, on a denture or orthodontic appliance. This

requirement would apply to a dentist or dental laboratory that sold, supplied, furnished, constructed, or repaired a full denture, partial denture with acrylic saddle, or removable orthodontic appliance with acrylic saddle for a specific patient. A dentist would be required to: notify a patient who was to receive a denture or orthodontic appliance that the patient had the right to decline to have identification marked on the denture or orthodontic appliance, ask the patient to choose the information to be marked on the denture or orthodontic appliance, and indicate the patient's choices on the work order to the dental laboratory.

Proposed MCL 333.16645

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill could result in an indeterminate increase in State Medicaid expenditures. Based on industry estimates that permanently marking dentures would cost between \$4 and \$10 per denture, and data indicating that between 10,000 and 15,000 Medicaid recipients receive denture-related services each year, the expected State General Fund/General Purpose cost of the bill would be between \$20,000 and \$60,000 annually.

**ARGUMENTS****Supporting Argument**

The bill would help in the identification of

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bodies of victims in cases in which the only readily available means of identification is through dental work. Marking a patient's dentures or orthodontic appliances and using that marking as a means of identifying an accident victim may prove to be more efficient than the current practice of tracking down a person's current dentist and identifying that person by dental records. In the case of the crash of Northwestern Airline's Detroit flight 255, for example, identification of many of the fatalities reportedly had to be done through the victims' dental records. By requiring that dentures and orthodontic appliance be marked permanently, the bill would aid greatly in the identification of accident victims.

#### **Supporting Argument**

Geriatric nursing home patients who wear dentures occasionally misplace them. When nursing home employees find these dentures, they often cannot return them to their rightful owner because it is difficult to identify who the owner is. This not only can be distressing to the denture wearer, but can cause financial and physical hardship if the dentures have to be replaced. The bill would aid nursing home residents and staff by ensuring that dentures, even if misplaced, were readily identifiable.

#### **Opposing Argument**

The bill does not provide for a method of retrieving necessary information about a patient, and does not specify a single site where this information could be stored and subsequently retrieved in an efficient and expedient manner. Furthermore, the bill does not specify a standard procedure for marking dentures.

**Response:** There should be no need for a central repository for denture information storage and retrieval, since nursing homes presumably would have on file the Social Security numbers and names of their residents, and airlines would have the names of the passengers on each flight. Furthermore, since no one way of marking is suitable for all dentures and orthodontic appliances, it would be preferable to require that dentures be marked permanently without restricting the method of marking.

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