

March 3, 1977

PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE AND SAFETY COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS:

A meeting of the House Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee was held on Thursday, March 3, 1977 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 431 of the State Capitol. All members were present with the exception of Reps. Holmes, Palmer, Colburn and Kimble.

SENATE BILL 22, sponsored by Senator Watt, was heard first. This bill was the result of a request from the Senior Citizens organizations of the state, who would like to have a representative on the Board of Morticians. Mr. A. G. Erickson, representing the NRTA (retired teachers) and the AARP (American Assoc. for Retired Persons), spoke. The morticians have been accused of deceptive practices in recent years. Little evidence of these practices has been found in Montana, but the image still continues in the state. A public member on the Board could help improve this image. Thomas C. O'Connor, Chairman of the Board of Morticians, then spoke; see prepared testimony. He took a neutral stand on the bill. He had been opposed to the original bill, because it stripped the Board and reduced its effectiveness by 40%. The additional person on the Board will amount to an added expense, but it will only be about \$400 more per year. Senator Watt then closed. This representative of the public will attend about two meetings per year. Questions were then asked. The \$400 per year would come out of the same fund that is supporting the Board at present. The hearing was then closed.

SENATE BILL 157 was heard. The sponsor was Senator Thomas. This bill changes the definition of "patient", to insure that a person who uses a wheel chair has a normal means of ambulation. There is a problem in Great Falls, where patients in the rehabilitative process have to have a licensed person transport them back and forth from therapy and elsewhere. This bill would allow other vehicles than ambulances to transport these persons. Chad Smith then spoke on behalf of Ben Broderick, operator of a Great Falls nursing home, and also on behalf of the medical industry in general. The van that would be used if this bill were enacted would be similar to the one appearing on "Ironsides" on television. Mr. Broderick will be able to provide this service for \$12-\$15, instead of \$30 or more, as the ambulance services charge. Taxi companies don't like to perform this service, because of the considerable liability involved. The Dept. of Health, Public Service Commission, and the Dept. of SRS support this bill also, stated Mr. Smith. Bill Ikard, Chief of the Medical Assistance Bureau, Dept. of SRS, then spoke. He is in support of this bill, particularly because it fits in with his bureau's concept that the only people that should be in nursing homes are the ones that need it. They shouldn't be stuck in the nursing

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homes if they are living there. Many of these people cannot afford visits to physical therapists and elsewhere because of the high cost of ambulances. Also, it is difficult for the ambulance services to give much of a discount. George M. Fenner, Administrator of the Hospital and Medical Facilities Division, Dept. of Health, then spoke up in favor of the bill. Ben Broderick, Park Place Nursing Home in Great Falls, then spoke. He has had a van for about two years now. He can only transport those that live at the nursing home, because of liability and also because of insurance. This measure will change that. This type of set-up has worked well in other states.

There were no opponents to SENATE BILL 157. Questions were then asked. About seven persons can be transported at one time in the van. The nursing home itself would train the drivers of these vans, and also they would have chauffeur's licenses. The hearing was then closed.

SENATE BILL 113 was then heard. Senator Dover was the sponsor; see prepared statement. Rod Gudgel, Montana Nursing Home Assoc., then spoke up in support of the bill.

There were no opponents to SB 113. Senator Dover closed.

The committee then went into executive session.

Rep. Feda moved that SB 113 BE CONCURRED IN; Rep. Porter seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. Rep. Barrett shall carry the bill on the floor.

Rep. Cox moved that SENATE BILL 157 BE CONCURRED IN. Discussion. Rep. Gould then seconded her motion. Motion carried unanimously. Rep. Harper agreed to carry this bill.

SENATE BILL 22 - Rep. Feda moved that the bill BE CONCURRED IN. Discussion. Rep. Ryan seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Wm RED Menahan
Chairman - Rep. Wm. "Red" Menahan

Secretary