

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE LEGISLATIVE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

March 27, 1979
3:30 p.m.
Room 104
State Capitol Building
Subject: HB 922

The meeting was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Chairman Francis Bardanouye. Representatives Hurwitz and Geseck were absent.

HOUSE BILL 922. Rep. Bennett, District 27, Powell County presented HB 922 of which he is sponsor. This bill appropriates money to the Department of Health and Environmental Sciences to provide a health and medical information telephone service. Under this system a person could inquire about a specific disease and the service would play back a three minute tape.

This system is in effect in several other states and is quite effective with reports of up to 800,000 calls a year. Rep. Bennett maintained that this system could save lives and worry for the doctors. Patients could avoid going to emergency rooms at the hospital if they could find out what they need to know on the phone.

This could also save the people money and the doctors time, because the tapes could advise the people as to whether they should seek medical assistance.

The total cost for the biennium is \$172,348. The tapes will be reviewed by the doctors in Montana and will say what they want them to say.

John W. Barlett spoke in support of this program. He said in other states where this is available the service is heavily used. In Witchita, for example, they receive up to 100,000 calls per year. Most helpful will be a tape on Medicare and Medicaide services. The system can also be used by the School Systems. The tapes are available through several firms and will be reviewed by Montana physicians. He finished saying the program will be costly but will save citizens money, so the money will be well spent.

Janice Connors, Montana Foundation for Medical Care, spoke in support of the program. She said the appropriation will be to maintain the Watts lines and personnel to run the switch board.

There were no opponents to the bill.

Rep. Hand asked if this program was for the public or for the physician. Proponents of the bill said it was definitely for the public's benefit.

March 27, 1979

Page 2

Rep. Yardley asked if this would be a 24 hour a day service. Janice Connors explained that eventually it would be, but initially it will be a 12 hour a day program and will be advertised so people will know then to call in.

Rep. Ellis asked if the service would be fast enough for emergencies. It was said that yes it would be, but basically it will be an educational program.

Rep. Bengston asked if the tapes would use language that the caller could understand. Rep. Bennett explained that the tapes would be geared to the layman's language. The doctors will go over the tapes and decide what they want them to say.

Rep. Lund asked if this was incorporated into the Citizen's Advocate Program. It was explained that this would be an extension of that program, but there will have to be qualified people answering the phones and will require tapes done by a professional.

Rep. Kvaalen said he thought that doctors were reluctant to diagnose over the phone. Rep. Bennett explained that people will call, describe their symptoms and a tape would be played back which relates to the signs and symptoms. The person could then tell if they needed to see a doctor.

There were no further questions and the hearing was closed on HB 922

HOUSE BILL 906. This is the Homestead Relief Act. Rep. South said there has been an amendment introduced to change \$12,000,000 to \$18,000,000 for the two years. But, in the final analysis, they will still have to have an appropriation to do it.

Rep. Manning moved Do Pass on HB 906. The question was called and the motion carried unanimously.

Rep. Moore moved Do Not Pass on HB 922. As a substitute motion, Rep. Menehan moved Do Pass on HB 922. The question was called and the motion failed. Representatives Manning, Manuel, Menehan and Yardley voting yes.

The votes were reversed for the original motion and the motion carried.

There was no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

FRANCIS BARDANOUVE, Chairman

Maureen Flanagan
Secretary