

Legislative Analysis



KATIE VIGER'S LAW: HONORARY NURSING LICENSE

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Senate Bill 1172

Sponsor: Sen. Raymond E. Basham

House Committee: Health Policy

Senate Committee: Committee of the Whole

Complete to 3-5-10

A SUMMARY OF SENATE BILL 1172 AS PASSED BY THE SENATE 3-3-10

The bill would allow an individual to receive an honorary nursing license under certain circumstances. Senate Bill 1172 would add a new section to Part 172 of the Public Health Code, which is entitled "Nursing." The new law would be known as "Katie Viger's Law."

The bill would allow the Department of Community Health, in consultation with the Michigan Board of Nursing, to issue an honorary license to an individual who had met all the requirements under Part 172 except for passing an examination and who was unable to take the examination due to advanced illness. This would apply whether the individual were living or deceased. The honorary license would not confer on the individual the right to engage in the practice of nursing. The bill would define "advanced illness" to mean that term as defined in Section 5653 of the Code: generally speaking, a medical or surgical condition for which there is no cure and for which a progression toward death is anticipated despite treatment.

MCL 333.17231

FISCAL IMPACT:

The bill would have no apparent fiscal impact on state or local government.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

According to news accounts, Katie Viger, the young woman for whom the proposed law is named, had always dreamed of being a nurse. In May, 2009, she graduated from the associate degree nursing program at Henry Ford Community College in Dearborn. Unfortunately, just days before taking the board examination last August, Katie was diagnosed with an incurable, aggressive form of brain cancer. According to media reports, one of her biggest regrets was being unable to take the licensing exam so she could receive her nursing degree. One of her nursing instructors, Cathy Wakefield, spearheaded an effort to obtain an honorary nursing license. As the request was explored, it was determined that legislation was needed to specifically grant the Department of Community Health the authority to issue an honorary license. Katie's rapidly

deteriorating health could not wait for the legislative process, and so the Board of Nursing issued a resolution in her honor as an interim measure. The framed resolution, stating that she had met the criteria to become a registered nurse, was presented to Katie by Sen. Raymond Basham, sponsor of this legislation, shortly before her death. On February 18th, a little more than a week after receiving the Board's resolution and just days before SB 1172 was ready for introduction, Katie Viger died. Enactment of the bill would therefore enable the DCH and the Board of Nursing to present Katie Viger with an honorary nursing degree, albeit posthumously.

Legislative Analyst: Susan Stutzky

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