

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washington Governor Gregoire Signs Hospital Infection Reporting Law

Law Requires Washington Hospitals to Report Patient Infection Rates to the Public

SEATTLE, WA – Washington Governor Christine Gregoire signed legislation today that requires hospitals in the state to disclose the rate at which patients acquire certain infections during treatment. Washington is the fifteenth state to require hospitals to disclose rates for patient infections, which claim 90,000 lives every year and add billions of dollars to the nation's health care bill, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“Every day, nearly 250 Americans die from infections they pick up in the hospital,” said Lisa McGiffert, Director of Consumers Union's Stop Hospital Infections Campaign (www.StopHospitalInfections.org). “Washington's new law will provide hospitals with a powerful new incentive to improve patient care and reduce preventable infections.”

Under the new law (HB 1106), sponsored by Representative Tom Campbell, Washington hospitals must begin to collect data on certain health care-associated infections and report it to the state. The law will be phased in so that hospitals first will be required to collect data on central-line associated bloodstream infections in intensive care units (beginning July 1, 2008), then ventilator-associated pneumonia (beginning January 1, 2009), and then surgical site infections for certain procedures (beginning January 1, 2010).

By December 1, 2009, and every December 1 in future years, the Department of Health will publish a report on its web site that compares the health care associated infection rates at individual hospitals in the state using the date reported in the previous calendar year.

Over the past three years, 15 states around the country have adopted laws requiring public reporting of infection rates. So far, Florida, Missouri, and Pennsylvania have produced public reports on their state hospitals' infection rates. More information about these reports and hospital infections can be found at: <http://www.consumersunion.org/campaigns/stophospitalinfections/learn.html>

“Research shows that hospitals could prevent many infections if they followed infection control practices more strictly,” said McGiffert. “Making infection rates public will spur hospitals to do a better job keeping patients safe and ultimately save lives and dollars.”

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