

CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT

**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1049**

Chapter 62, Laws of 2019

66th Legislature  
2019 Regular Session

HEALTH CARE WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 28, 2019

Passed by the House March 7, 2019  
Yeas 97 Nays 0

FRANK CHOPP

**Speaker of the House of Representatives**

Passed by the Senate April 12, 2019  
Yeas 47 Nays 0

KAREN KEISER

**President of the Senate**

Approved April 19, 2019 10:42 AM

JAY INSLEE

**Governor of the State of Washington**

CERTIFICATE

I, Bernard Dean, Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives of the State of Washington, do hereby certify that the attached is **SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1049** as passed by House of Representatives and the Senate on the dates hereon set forth.

BERNARD DEAN

**Chief Clerk**

FILED

April 22, 2019

**Secretary of State  
State of Washington**

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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1049**

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Passed Legislature - 2019 Regular Session

**State of Washington                      66th Legislature                      2019 Regular Session**

**By** House Civil Rights & Judiciary (originally sponsored by Representatives Macri, Stokesbary, Riccelli, Jinkins, Tharinger, Slatter, Caldier, Appleton, Wylie, Cody, Doglio, and Stonier)

READ FIRST TIME 01/22/19.

1            AN ACT Relating to health care provider and health care facility  
2 whistleblower protections; amending RCW 43.70.075; and adding a new  
3 section to chapter 7.71 RCW.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5            **Sec. 1.** RCW 43.70.075 and 2006 c 8 s 109 are each amended to  
6 read as follows:

7            (1)(a) The identity of a whistleblower (~~who~~) must remain  
8 confidential if that whistleblower:

9            (i) Complains, in good faith, to the department of health about  
10 the improper quality of care by a health care provider, or in a  
11 health care facility(~~, as defined in RCW 43.72.010, or who~~);

12            (ii) Initiates in good faith any investigation or administrative  
13 proceeding about a complaint of improper quality of care made to the  
14 department under this section; or

15            (iii) Submits a notification or report of an adverse event or an  
16 incident, in good faith, to the department of health under RCW  
17 70.56.020 or to the independent entity under RCW 70.56.040(~~, shall~~  
18 remain confidential)).

19            (b) The provisions of RCW 4.24.500 through 4.24.520, providing  
20 certain protections to persons who communicate to government  
21 agencies, shall apply to complaints and notifications or reports of

1 adverse events or incidents filed under this section. The identity of  
2 the whistleblower shall remain confidential unless the department  
3 determines that the complaint (~~(of)~~), initiation, notification, or  
4 report (~~(of the adverse event or incident)~~) was not made or done in  
5 good faith.

6 (c) An employee who is a whistleblower, as defined in this  
7 section, and who as a result of being a whistleblower has been  
8 subjected to workplace reprisal or retaliatory action has the  
9 remedies provided under chapter 49.60 RCW.

10 (d) A whistleblower who is not an employee and who as a result of  
11 being a whistleblower has been subjected to reprisal or retaliatory  
12 action may initiate a civil action in a court of competent  
13 jurisdiction to either enjoin further violations, recover actual  
14 damages sustained by the whistleblower, or both, and recover the cost  
15 of the suit including reasonable attorneys' fees. The court shall  
16 award reasonable attorneys' fees in favor of the respondent if the  
17 civil action was initiated by a whistleblower who is not an employee  
18 and the court finds that the respondent has not engaged in the  
19 alleged reprisal or retaliatory action and that the complaint was  
20 frivolous, unreasonable, or groundless.

21 (2) ~~(a)~~ A civil action under this section may not be brought  
22 more than two years after the date when the retaliation occurred.

23 (3) In this section:

24 (a) "Health care facility" means hospices licensed under chapter  
25 70.127 RCW, hospitals licensed under chapter 70.41 RCW, rural health  
26 care facilities as defined in RCW 70.175.020, psychiatric hospitals  
27 licensed under chapter 71.12 RCW, nursing homes licensed under  
28 chapter 18.51 RCW, community mental health centers licensed under  
29 chapter 71.05 or 71.24 RCW, kidney disease treatment centers licensed  
30 under chapter 70.41 RCW, ambulatory diagnostic, treatment, or  
31 surgical facilities licensed under chapter 70.41 RCW, ambulatory  
32 surgical facilities licensed under chapter 70.230 RCW, substance use  
33 disorder treatment facilities licensed under chapter 71.24 RCW, and  
34 home health agencies licensed under chapter 70.127 RCW, and includes  
35 such facilities if owned and operated by a political subdivision or  
36 instrumentality of the state and such other facilities as required by  
37 federal law and implementing regulations.

38 (b) "Improper quality of care" means any practice, procedure,  
39 action, or failure to act that violates any state law or rule of the  
40 applicable state health licensing authority under Title 18 or

1 chapters 70.41, (~~70.96A~~) 71.24, 70.127, 70.175, 71.05, 71.12, and  
2 71.24 RCW, and enforced by the department of health. Each health  
3 disciplinary authority as defined in RCW 18.130.040 may, with  
4 consultation and interdisciplinary coordination provided by the state  
5 department of health, adopt rules defining accepted standards of  
6 practice for their profession that shall further define improper  
7 quality of care. Improper quality of care shall not include good  
8 faith personnel actions related to employee performance or actions  
9 taken according to established terms and conditions of employment.

10 (~~(b)~~) (c) "Reprisal or retaliatory action" means but is not  
11 limited to: Denial of adequate staff to perform duties; frequent  
12 staff changes; frequent and undesirable office changes; refusal to  
13 assign meaningful work; unwarranted and unsubstantiated report of  
14 misconduct pursuant to Title 18 RCW; letters of reprimand or  
15 unsatisfactory performance evaluations; demotion; reduction in pay;  
16 denial of promotion; suspension; dismissal; denial of employment;  
17 (~~and~~) a supervisor or superior encouraging coworkers to behave in a  
18 hostile manner toward the whistleblower; and the revocation,  
19 suspension, or reduction of medical staff membership or privileges  
20 without following a medical staff sanction process that is consistent  
21 with section 2 of this act.

22 (~~(e)~~) (d) "Whistleblower" means a consumer, employee, or health  
23 care professional including a health care provider as defined in RCW  
24 7.70.020(1) or member of a medical staff at a health care facility,  
25 who in good faith reports alleged quality of care concerns to the  
26 department of health or initiates, participates, or cooperates in any  
27 investigation or administrative proceeding under this section.

28 (~~(3)~~) (4) Nothing in this section prohibits a health care  
29 facility from making any decision exercising its authority to  
30 terminate, suspend, or discipline an employee who engages in  
31 workplace reprisal or retaliatory action against a whistleblower.

32 (~~(4)~~) (5) The department shall adopt rules to implement  
33 procedures for filing, investigation, and resolution of whistleblower  
34 complaints that are integrated with complaint procedures under Title  
35 18 RCW for health professionals or health care facilities.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 7.71 RCW  
37 to read as follows:

38 (1) A medical staff privilege sanction process that results in a  
39 revocation, suspension, or reduction of medical staff privileges or

1 membership at a health care facility must meet the requirements of  
2 RCW 70.41.200(1)(b).

3 (2) A professional peer review action taken by a health care  
4 facility that imposes a revocation, suspension, or reduction of  
5 medical staff privileges or membership must meet the requirements of  
6 and is subject to 42 U.S.C. Sec. 11112.

7 (3) In this section, "health care facility" has the same meaning  
8 as in RCW 43.70.075.

Passed by the House March 7, 2019.

Passed by the Senate April 12, 2019.

Approved by the Governor April 19, 2019.

Filed in Office of Secretary of State April 22, 2019.

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