



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

House Office Building, 9 South  
Lansing, Michigan 48909  
Phone: 517/373-6466

**NURSING HOME COMPLAINTS: 24-  
HOUR TOLL-FREE HOTLINE**

**House Bill 4075 as introduced  
First Analysis (3-15-01)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Paul Wojno  
Committee: Senior Health, Security and  
Retirement**

***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

The Public Health Code allows any person who believes that nursing home laws or regulations have been violated to make a complaint to the Department of Consumer and Industry Services requesting that an investigation take place. The provision says that the request must be made as a written complaint or the department will assist a person making an oral complaint to turn the request into a written complaint within seven days. Some people believe all such complaints should be acted on expeditiously and fear that this is not always the case, with some reported responses dragging out past a month. One proposed method of ensuring a quick response to complaints involves the creation of a 24-hour, toll-free, consumer complaint hotline within the Department of Consumer and Industry Services, and requiring that complainants receive a response within 24 hours.

***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would require the Department of Consumer and Industry Services to provide a toll-free consumer complaint and inquiry telephone line, accessible 24 hours a day and staffed at a level to ensure a response to each complaint within 24 hours. The department would have to establish a response system for the hotline that included an intake form that would serve as a written complaint, a system for forwarding an intake form to an investigator within 48 hours after being filled out by the hotline staff, and for forwarding a copy of the completed intake form to the complainant within 48 hours after it was completed.

The bill would delete the current requirement that complaints be submitted in writing (although consumers could still choose to complain in writing) and the hotline provisions would replace the current provisions regarding the department's assisting complainants in reducing their oral complaint to writing. Oral complaints would now be made through the hotline.

The bill would not affect the current provisions that allow the department to investigate complaints based on their urgency or the provisions that describe how and within what time frame complaints are to be investigated.

MCL 333.21799a

***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the Department of Consumer and Industry Services has already established a Complaint Intake Unit within its Bureau of Health Systems that offers a 24-hour hotline for nursing home complaints. The budgeted costs related to the complaint unit are roughly \$400,000 for the current fiscal year. The HFA says that the bill would increase costs, perhaps up to \$10,000 annually, by requiring that a response be given each complainant within 24 hours. The additional costs would be for staff time to respond to approximately 2-3 calls per weekend. (3-12-01)

***ARGUMENTS:***

***For:***

Although the Department of Consumer and Industry Services already operates a 24-hour, toll-free, consumer complaint hotline, the bill is needed to ensure a timely response to consumer complaints about violations of nursing home laws and regulations. It is intolerable to allow a lengthy response time to complaints, say advocates for the proposal. Complainants should know that their complaints have been heard. Under this proposal, complainants would get a copy of a completed complaint intake form within 48 hours after it has been completed. And the bill requires that the intake form be forwarded to an investigator within 48 hours of being filled out, which could speed up the initiation of complaint investigations.

**House Bill 4075 (3-15-01)**

***POSITIONS:***

The Health Care Association of Michigan does not oppose the bill. (3-13-01)

The Department of Consumer and Industry Services is neutral on the bill. (3-13-01)

Analyst: D. Martens

---

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.