

SENATE No. 65

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

SPECIAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE RELATIVE TO THE FEASIBILITY AND COST OF PROVIDING MEDICAL TREATMENT IN TIMES OF EMERGENCY FOR OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES OF THE COMMONWEALTH AT THE STATE HOUSE AND FOR CERTAIN VISITORS THEREAT.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives.

The Commission on Administration and Finance, to which was referred chapter 19 of the Resolves of 1946, accompanied by Senate Document, No. 139, presents the following report.

Though the state service has set the pace in many instances for private industry, the state government has lagged in providing modern working conditions which have become customary in private business.

Medical attention for State House employees and countless visitors to the capitol is not available except through a physician in the State Department of Public Health, whose major work is with duties in that department.

For the past nine years, Dr. Solomon L. Skvirsky, Assistant Director of Local Health Administration in the Public Health Department, has voluntarily provided medical service.

The following is a tabulation by months of the number of persons — largely state employees — who have been treated by Dr. Skvirsky in 1946. With the general knowledge that such facilities were available there would have been a far greater load.

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| January | 43 |
| February | 51 |
| March | 40 |
| April | 48 |
| May | 52 |
| June | 37 |
| July and August (on vacation) | 49 |
| September | 47 |
| October | 39 |

The figures for September also include the day of the V. F. W. parade, when the State House was a gathering point for hundreds of persons. Each of the cases listed consumed at least fifteen or twenty minutes, while many took a longer length of time. Treatments ranged from removal of foreign bodies in the eye, lacerations, strapping of feet, headaches, ear conditions and accidents involving fractures to diagnosis of acute appendicitis.

Relief was given and first aid rendered to some, while others were referred to family physicians or sent directly to hospitals for emergency treatment.

During these nine years there were no facilities available for elementary examination; for example, one person was forced to enter the Senate reading room to lie on one of the couches there while examination was made of a severe abdominal pain, which later proved to be acute appendicitis.

Minimum equipment requirements for establishment of a State House medical service would consist of an examination table, instrument cabinet, table for medications, a desk, two chairs, a mirror, coat closet, appropriate professional instruments and equipment. The room provided for such services should be located near a first floor exit or near an elevator, and should have a window, toilet, lavatory, be equipped with a curtain to shield the examination table, and include a small dressing room for patients.

This cost would be in keeping with the feeling that the new activity should receive a trial period without large expense.

Continued part-time services of the Assistant Director of Local Health Administration should be made official and compensated for, at the discretion and judgment of the Commission on Administration and Finance. This should also include the requirement that the physician or nurse remain within the State House on call during business hours, including overtime when the Legislature is in late session and during official functions when the State House is necessarily open. This is not required at present, although Dr. Skvirsky has been available voluntarily.

It would be desirable to have the physician or nurse in attendance in the examination room at all times during business hours. At the present time the sickness load would not keep a physician busy on a full-time basis unless other assignments were added to his duties. Such added duties might include examination of employees to determine eligibility for retirement.

With the appointment of a health employee responsible to the Commission on Administration and Finance, records could be kept to point out health hazards, and, if desired, a check could be made on employee absences through a requirement that absent employees report to the health unit on their return. The statistics, thus gathered, would provide valuable knowledge of the causes of employee absences.

In addition, the employee in charge, through dealing with employees, would be informed of health hazards within the State House, could inspect such hazards, and make recommendations for their elimination.

A health program to promote better physical condition among employees could be administered by the employee through pamphlets dealing with problems made apparent in the operation of the health unit.

The Commission on Administration and Finance can, at a later date, investigate the problem of providing minimum emergency health care for employees of other state departments not housed in the State House.

The employee in charge should be authorized to provide services needed during the business hours of the State House within the limits of expediency without involving the state in costs of extensive medication and treatment.

The proposed unit would be a step in promoting efficiency among state employees, and the assurance provided by the suggested medical care program would also be reflected in reduction of absenteeism.

The functions of the proposed service would not normally come within the jurisdiction of the State Health Department. To co-ordinate with other employee services and to come within the jurisdiction of a state agency dealing with employees, the unit should be placed under the Commission on Administration and Finance.

The financial requirements already outlined — about \$1,500 for equipment, drugs and supplies, and staff salary or compensation — should include special malpractice insurance protection costing approximately \$25 a year.

For the present, it would be advisable to staff this service with a physician or registered nurse.

The Commission is endeavoring, with the Superintendent of Buildings, to arrange for suitable space for the establishment of this unit.

THOMAS H. BUCKLEY,

Chairman.

GEORGE J. CRONIN,

Commissioner and State Purchasing Agent.

CHARLES W. GREENOUGH,

Budget Commissioner.

FRED A. MONCEWICZ,

Comptroller.