

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2015 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Health Policy

CS/HB 697 — Public Health Emergencies

by Health Quality Subcommittee and Rep. Gonzalez (CS/SB 950 by Health Policy Committee and Senator Hukill)

The bill amends provisions relating to the Department of Health's (DOH) authority to initiate and enforce quarantine orders for persons, animals, and premises. The DOH is authorized to isolate individuals in the same manner as existing authority for a quarantine. The bill defines "isolation" to mean the separation of an individual who is reasonably believed to be infected with a communicable disease from individuals who are not infected, to prevent the possible spread of the disease. The bill defines "quarantine" to mean the separation of an individual reasonably believed to have been exposed to a communicable disease, but who is not yet ill, from individuals who not been so exposed, to prevent the possible spread of the disease.

The bill requires law enforcement to assist the DOH in enforcing orders (as well as rules and laws) adopted under ch. 381, F.S., related to public health, and makes any DOH isolation or quarantine order immediately enforceable by law enforcement. Quarantine and isolation orders are imposed through order by the State Surgeon General or by the director of a county health department or his or her designee.

The bill amends s. 817.50, F.S., to prohibit a person from willfully and intentionally making a fraudulent claim during a declared public health emergency that he or she has contracted a communicable disease to a health care provider in order to obtain, or attempt to obtain, goods, products, merchandise, or services. The bill also prohibits a person from falsely reporting to a law enforcement officer that he or she has a communicable disease. Both of these actions are punishable as a misdemeanor of the second degree.

The bill also includes a legislative finding that the act fulfills an important state interest.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2015.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 114-0