

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SB 5668**

**AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE,  
MARCH 5, 1991**

**Brief Description:** Regarding adequate compensation for mental health service providers.

**SPONSORS:** Senator Niemi.

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE**

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5668 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators West, Chairman; L. Smith, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Johnson, L. Kreidler, Niemi, and Wojahn.

**Staff:** Don Sloma (786-7414)

**Hearing Dates:** February 26, 1991; March 5, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

Chapter 205, Laws of 1989, section 3, subsection 18 required the Secretary of Social and Health Services to report to the Legislature on the recruitment, training and compensation of mental health professionals in the community. The report contains several relevant findings in these areas, including that "Average salaries for community mental health staff are lower than other private sector jobs. In addition, they are 38.4 percent less than salaries received by public sector (state-hired) staff."

**SUMMARY:**

The Legislature intends that licensed service providers under the Community Mental Health Act pay salaries adequate to recruit and retain qualified personnel. Nothing in the act should be construed to unduly limit the ability of licensed service providers to pay salaries adequate to meet this intent.

The first priority for vendor rate increases, special salary related legislative appropriations, and inflationary adjustments must be to increase salaries of direct care staff.

Service providers must adopt minimum qualifications for personnel that ensure that clients will be well served and that personnel costs will be no greater than is necessary to provide adequate care.

Fifteen million dollars is appropriated from the general fund to increase the salaries of direct care staff of licensed

service providers to a level sufficient to recruit and retain qualified personnel.

**EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:**

Clinical care supervisors and residential care staff are added to those who would receive salary increases under provisions of the act.

**Appropriation:** \$15 million

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** available

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

Low pay rates contribute to high staff turnover in mental health service provider agencies. This contributes to poor continuity of care, lower stability of the chronically mentally ill in community settings, and ultimately to higher rates of state hospitalization. Salary increases are needed soon to reverse this trend and to help consolidate recent improvements in mental health care in the state.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** PRO: Cheryl Strange, Thurston/Mason CMHC; Jack P. Bilsborough, AMI of Washington; Patricia DeBoer, AMI; Tony Vivenzio, Kathy Lee Prohaska, SEIV; Susan Caverly, WSNA; Rosa Kane, NSRSN