

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1150

As Reported By House Committee On:
State Government

Title: An act relating to repealing the sunset provisions for the regulation of counselors.

Brief Description: Repealing the sunset provisions of the counselor registration statute.

Sponsors: Representatives Anderson, Veloria, Pruitt, King, Brough, Vance, Forner, Valle, Eide and Jacobsen.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, February 1, 1993, DP.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Reams, Ranking Minority Member; Vance, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Conway; Dyer; King; and Pruitt.

Staff: Bonnie Austin (786-7135).

Background: In 1987, the Legislature established the counselor registration and certification program. Under the program, all counselors who charge a fee for their services are required to register with the Department of Health. Additionally, counselors may be certified as social workers, mental health counselors, or marriage and family therapists if they pass an examination and meet specific requirements as to education and experience.

The counselor registration and certification program was enacted to educate the public as to the qualifications and practices of counselors and to protect the public against abusive practitioners. Under the program, counselors are subject to the provisions of the Uniform Disciplinary Act.

The Department of Health currently administers the counselor registration and certification program. According to the department, there are approximately 12,000 registered and certified counselors in the state.

The counselor registration and certification program is scheduled to terminate on June 30, 1994.

Summary of Bill: The termination provisions of the counselor registration and certification statute are repealed.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This is consumer protection legislation. The counselor registration program was enacted to protect the public from unethical practitioners. Unethical practitioners have been disciplined and barred from practice. Continuing the program will have no fiscal impact because the registration and certification fees cover the cost of the program.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Bonita Hickman, Washington Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (Pro); Cris Kessler, NASW co-chair Legislative Action Committee (Pro); Dan Donham, Washington Mental Health Counselors Association (Pro); and Steve Boruchowitz, Department of Health (Pro).