

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1670

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to the role of school counselors in public schools.

Brief Description: Articulating the purpose and role of school counselors.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall and Santos.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/13/07, 2/16/07 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Defines a school counselor as a professional educator with state certification whose purpose and role is to plan, organize, and deliver a comprehensive school guidance and counseling program based on national counseling standards.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Quall, Chair; Priest, Ranking Minority Member; Anderson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Roach, Santos and P. Sullivan.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Under state law, the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is authorized to set standards for approval of preparation and certification programs for Educational Staff Associates (ESAs). Through administrative rules, the PESB defines seven types of ESA certification: school counselor, school speech pathologist/audiologist, school nurse, school occupational therapist, school physical therapist, school psychologist, and school social worker. There are different standards for each type of program and certification. Because the preparation programs are competency-based, there is extensive information in the administrative rules about standards for and the role of school counselors. However, there is

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no definition of school counselor, and only one reference to school counselors, in the state education code.

Summary of Bill:

A school counselor is a professional educator with a valid counselor certification issued by the PESB. The purpose and role of a school counselor is to plan, organize, and deliver a comprehensive school guidance and counseling program that personalizes education; supports, promotes, and enhances development of all students; and is based on the National Standards for School Counseling Programs of the American School Counselor Association.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) We know that school counselors play a very important role and we want to acknowledge the good work they do with students and recognize that they have to be certified and meet national standards. This establishes for the first time a purpose and role for school counselors in state law. It emphasizes that the work of a school counselor is not defined by the person in the job, but that there are specific training requirements and expectations. This provides a level of accountability and clear guidelines that school counselors should be expected to implement a comprehensive guidance and counseling program for all students. Counselors serve a vital, multi-faceted role in the high school experience. Academics are only a part of that experience; counselors must be prepared to deal with all aspects. Anyone labeled a counselor should in fact be a certified school counselor who meets these standards. There needs to be a greater understanding and respect for the role of the counselor. Counselors are highly qualified educators but underutilized. The focus shouldn't be on what can a school counselor do, but how can students change as a result of school counselors.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Jenny Morgan, Becky Ballbaugh, Matt Carlson, and James Hopper, Washington School Counselor Association; Brennan O'Keefe, Hannah Peckler, Aaron Lampkin, and Matthew Walsh, Capital High School; Dave Forrester, Olympia High School; Megyn Shea, Vancouver Middle School; Marian Illingworth; Christopher Sink, Seattle Pacific University; Mike Hubert, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Liaison; Mary Schroeder and Dan Windisch, Washington Counseling Association; and Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.