

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6328

As Amended by House, March 1, 2012

Title: An act relating to the creation of a retired active license for mental health professionals.

Brief Description: Authorizing creation of a retired active license for mental health professionals.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Conway, Hargrove, Regala, Harper, Stevens and McAuliffe).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/26/12, 2/02/12 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/14/12, 45-1.

Passed House: 3/01/12, 96-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6328 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Carrell, Harper, McAuliffe and Padden.

Staff: Kevin Black (786-7747)

Background: The Department of Health (DOH) licenses practitioners in the fields of mental health counseling, marriage and family therapy, and social work. The license framework provides for competency requirements, disciplinary procedures, continuing education requirements, and a licensing fee.

A retired active license is a license from DOH which permits a health care professional to practice in emergent or intermittent circumstances for a reduced license renewal fee. Emergent or intermittent circumstances are defined by rule to mean practice for no more than 90 days each year or practice during emergency circumstances such as earthquakes, floods, times of declared war, or other states of emergency. The holder of such a license must meet continuing education or competency requirements established by the disciplinary authority.

No specific rules exist currently that would permit a retired active license to be issued for a mental health counselor, marriage and family therapist, or social worker. DOH has recently

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refused requests to promulgate such rules based on a declared moratorium on new rulemaking.

Summary of Substitute Bill: DOH must promulgate rules relating to issuance of a retired active license to any mental health counselor, marriage and family therapist, advanced social worker, or independent social worker who holds an active license or has held an active license within five years of applying for a retired active license.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: Retired mental health professionals have been working with DOH to establish a retired active license. The roadblock to accomplishing this has been restraints on rulemaking. There is a shortage of volunteers who are mental health professionals to help with disasters. Retired professionals are a strong source of volunteers, but don't want to keep up with continuing education requirements and lose their professional license, which is a requirement for the volunteer work. Retired professionals don't need continuing education.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Conway, prime sponsor; Walt Huber, retired social worker; Patrick Nagle, retired counselor; Gerald Anderson, therapist.

House Amendment(s): Removes the requirement that rules promulgated by DOH must provide that the applicant for a retired active license must have a license in good standing or have held an active license in good standing that expired within five years.