

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5092

As Amended by House, April 17, 2013

Title: An act relating to providing an exemption from continuing competency requirements for registered nurses who seek advanced nursing degrees.

Brief Description: Providing an exemption from continuing competency requirements for registered nurses who seek advanced nursing degrees.

Sponsors: Senators Benton, Shin, Braun, Roach and Honeyford.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health Care: 1/29/13, 2/05/13 [DP].

Passed Senate: 3/11/13, 49-0.

Passed House: 4/17/13, 97-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Becker, Chair; Dammeier, Vice Chair; Keiser, Ranking Member; Bailey, Cleveland, Ericksen, Parlette and Schlicher.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: The Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (Commission) regulates the nursing profession by setting licensing requirements, standards of practice, continuing competency requirements, and disciplinary standards. Rules, policies, and procedures developed by the Commission must promote the delivery of quality health care to Washington citizens. The 15 commission members are appointed by the Governor to four year terms and include 12 nurses and three public members.

The Commission determines licensing examination requirements for registered nurse, advanced registered nurse practitioner, and licensed practical nurse applicants. Registered nurses must renew their registration every year on or before their birthday. In order to renew their registration, registered nurses must complete 531 practice hours and 45 continuing education hours every three years. Nursing practice means the performance of acts requiring substantial specialized nursing knowledge, judgment, and skills as set by current law under RCW 18.70.040 through 18.79.060. The Commission permits nurses to meet the practice

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hours for continuing competency requirements by working in paid or unpaid positions which require a nursing license.

Summary of Bill: The Commission must adopt rules that provide for an exemption for active nurse practice hours. The exemption must be provided for registered nurses who are enrolled for at least six hours per semester or quarter in an accredited bachelor's of science in nursing program or who are enrolled in an accredited master's of science nursing program for the current reporting period. A registered nurse claiming this exemption must maintain passing grades and complete the program within three years of acceptance.

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: OTHER: The Commission has been considering both competency and continuing education rules and will add further explanation in its frequently asked questions at the next meeting on March 8, 2013. We would like to include LPNs and doctoral students. This should include doctoral students of nursing. We would like to see further clarification of what is meant by accreditation in the bill, and we think some clarification is needed regarding enrollment in a program.

Persons Testifying: OTHER: Paula Meyer, Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission, Chris Thompson, Independent Colleges of WA.

House Amendment(s): Requires the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (NCQAC) to adopt rules on continuing competency. Removes the following requirements for a nurse to qualify for the exemption from nurse practice hours: Washington domicile and licensure, enrollment for at least six credit hours in a bachelor's of science in nursing program or a master's of science nursing program; maintenance of passing grades; and completion of the program within three years. Instead, allows the NCQAC to make exemptions from the continuing competency requirements for a registered nurse who is seeking an advanced nursing degree. Clarifies that this does not prohibit the NCQAC from granting additional exemptions to nurses enrolled in advanced education.