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## Higher Education Committee

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### HB 1344

**Brief Description:** Creating the nurse educator pay it forward program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Pollet, Haler, Appleton, Walsh, Bergquist, McBride, S. Hunt, Goodman, Ormsby, Dunshee, Gregerson, Reykdal, Tarleton, Cody, Sawyer, Orwall, Pettigrew, Jinkins, Moscoso, Kilduff, Wylie, Tharinger and Riccelli.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) to establish a Nurse Educator Pay It Forward (PIF) Program in collaboration with the Washington State Nursing Commission.
- Provides funding to cover an advanced degree program for Registered Nurses who want to become a nurse educator through the Nurse Educator PIF Program.
- Establishes a contractual obligation for participants to pay a set percentage of their income for a set time period back to the Nurse Educator PIF Program and work in the state as a nurse educator for at least five years beginning six months after graduating or discontinuation of their program.
- Creates the Nurse Educator PIF account for the purposes of the program.

**Hearing Date:** 1/28/15

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

#### **Background:**

##### Nurse Educators.

A nurse educator is a Registered Nurse (RN) that holds an advanced degree that serves as a faculty member in a nursing school or teaching hospital. An advanced degree includes, but is not limited to, a Master of Nursing, Doctor of Nursing Practice, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing. A student in one of these programs may specialize in education by taking classes in health education and nurse training.

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According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), nursing schools around the United States are experiencing large faculty vacancies in nursing programs. A survey by AACN to 680 nursing schools with baccalaureate or graduate degree programs identified 1,358 faculty vacancies, a national nurse faculty vacancy rate of 8.3 percent. Approximately 87 percent of the vacancies were for faculty positions that required a doctoral degree. The survey also found that schools cited a need to create an additional 98 faculty positions to accommodate demand for expanding nursing programs. \

The nurse faculty shortage is attributed to an aging workforce. Traditionally, nurses practice in their field for a number of years before returning to graduate school which increases the average age of nurse faculty. For example, a AACN's 2012-13 report found the average age of a professor with a doctoral degree to be 61.3 and 57.2 years old for a professor with a master's degree.

#### Pay it Forward Programs.

The Pay it Forward (PIF) Program model is a concept that allows students to go to college without incurring payments up front as an alternative to student debt. Instead, students sign a contract that requires them to pay a portion of their future income for a designated time period after graduating. Depending on the program, the student may also have to meet a service requirement in which they work off a portion of the funding they received. Several states have enacted legislation using a type of PIF program structure, including Washington.

#### Health Professionals Conditional Scholarship Program.

The Health Professionals Loan Repayment and Scholarship Program was established to provide loans to students pursuing a credentialed health profession to serve in Washington's critical shortage areas. The participants who receive a loan incur an obligation to repay the loan with interest unless they serve as a health professional in a health professional shortage area in Washington. The Department of Health, in consultation with the Office of Student Financial Services and the Department of Social and Health services, determines which health care professions are approved for the loan. This is based on an assessment that determines there is a shortage or insufficient availability of a credentialed profession. According to WSAC, approximately 100 health professionals worked in underserved areas of Washington due to the program, and since 1990, the program has funded over 1,000 health professionals who worked in 38 Washington counties. Current eligible professions for this program include physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, RNs, midwives, pharmacists, dentists, and registered dental hygienists.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

The Nurse Educator PIF Program is created. The WSAC, in collaboration with the Washington State Nursing Commission, is in charge of developing, implementing, and administering the program. Students who are eligible to participate in the program include RNs who want to continue their education in an eligible program to become a nurse educator. An eligible program includes those which are accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency that lead to an advance degree in nursing or related field at a Washington institution of higher education.

Students who choose to participate in the Nurse Educator PIF Program must sign a binding contract that obligates them to make contributions back to the program six months after graduating or discontinuation of their eligible program. The amount and length of time the participant needs to contribute back to the program will be decided by the WSAC before January 1 of each year for the upcoming academic year's cohort. The WSAC is required to set the contribution amount between 3 and 8 percent of the participants' income and the contribution period between 10 and 15 years. Each individual participant's contribution will be pro-rated according to the proportion of total credits, or equivalent, that the Nurse Educator PIF Program funded. Participants are also required to complete a service requirement to fulfill their obligation under the contract. The Nurse Educator PIF Program service requirement is five-years of full-time work as a nurse educator in a Washington nursing education program that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency. If a participant does not complete the five-year service requirement at the end of their set contribution period, they will be required to continue paying contributions to the program until they meet the service requirement or reach a contribution period of 20 years, which ever comes first.

The Nurse Educator PIF Program allows for 50 full-time equivalent slots each year at qualifying programs in the state. A participant will receive funding for their eligible program at full-time enrollment for the equivalent of five academic years. The participant will need to maintain satisfactory academic progress in order to maintain funding. Participants who decide to attend a private institution of higher education will receive funding for a portion of their tuition and fees that is equivalent to the tuition and fees at the most expensive public institution of higher education for an equivalent qualifying program.

The Nurse Educator PIF account is created and will consist of funds appropriated by the Legislature and any private contributions, including principal and interest.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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