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## Health Care & Wellness Committee

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### HB 2671

**Brief Description:** Improving the behavioral health of people in the agricultural industry.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Wilcox, Jinkins, Dye, Orwall, Schmick, Cody, DeBolt, Walsh, Maycumber, Griffey, Barkis, Haler, Buys, Muri, Condotta, Robinson, Doglio, Macri, Stanford and Irwin.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a task force to review options to improve the behavioral health status of agricultural workers and reduce suicide risk.
- Establishes a pilot program in two counties related to behavioral health and suicide prevention in the agricultural industry based upon task force recommendations.

**Hearing Date:** 1/24/18

**Staff:** Chris Blake (786-7392).

#### Background:

Legislation passed in 2014 directed the Department of Health to establish a steering committee to develop a suicide prevention plan for Washington. The "Washington State Suicide Prevention Plan" (Plan) was published in January 2016. The Plan categorizes its recommendations into four areas: (1) healthy and empowered individuals, families, and communities; (2) clinical and community preventive services; (3) treatment and support services; and (4) suicide surveillance, research, and evaluation.

The Plan identifies people living in small-town rural communities as one of the populations at increased risk of suicidal behavior. The suicide rate for small-town rural communities is 18 per 100,000, while suburban and large-town rural areas have a rate of 16 per 100,000, and urban areas have a rate of 14 per 100,000. Nationally, a 2016 report from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the suicide rate in the occupation group including farming, fishing, and forestry was higher than any other occupational group.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

## Summary of Bill:

A task force on behavioral health and suicide prevention in the agricultural industry (task force) is established. The task force must review: (1) data related to the behavioral health status of persons associated with the agricultural industry; (2) factors that affect the behavioral health status and suicide rates of persons working in the agricultural industry; (3) components for inclusion in a behavioral health and suicide prevention pilot program; and (4) options to improve the behavioral health status of and reduce suicide risk among agricultural workers and their families.

The task force is to be staffed by the State Office of Rural Health at the Department of Health. The 16 members of the task force include:

- the Secretary of the Department of Health, or his or her designee;
- the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, or his or her designee;
- the Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services, or his or her designee;
- a representative of Washington State University;
- a representative of an association that represents counties;
- one representative each from two associations representing farm and ranch families in Washington;
- representatives from the Dairy Products Commission, the Grain Commission, and the Tree Fruit Research Commission; and
- representatives of associations representing rural health clinics, federally-qualified health centers, community behavioral health agencies, mental health providers, and substance use disorder treatment providers.

By December 1, 2018, the task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the committees of the Legislature with jurisdiction over health care issues.

The Department of Health must establish a pilot program related to behavioral health and suicide prevention in the agricultural industry workforce. The pilot program shall be established in two counties that are reliant on the agricultural industry. The Department of Health shall consider the report of the task force when implementing the pilot program. The pilot program shall include the development of a free resource for workers in the agricultural industry that is linked to agency and stakeholder web sites. The resource must be made available through both a web portal and a telephone support line. The resource must:

- provide a resource for training agricultural industry management, workers, and their family members in suicide risk reduction;
- provide a resource to build capacity in the agricultural industry to train individuals to deliver training in person;
- contain model crisis protocols that address behavioral health and suicide risk reduction identification, intervention, reentry, and postvention; and
- contain model marketing materials and messages that promote behavioral health in the agricultural industry.

By December 1, 2019, a preliminary report on the elements and implementation of the pilot program must be submitted to the Legislature. A final report is due by December 1, 2020, with results of the pilot program and recommendations for improvement and expansion of the pilot program.

Legislative findings are made regarding the role of the agricultural industry in Washington's economy and identity, the factors that affect the behavioral health of workers in the agricultural industry, the high rate of suicide among agricultural sector workers, and the need to develop resources for workers in the agricultural industry.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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