
Appropriations Committee

SB 5525

Brief Description: Concerning veterans' mental health services at institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, Palumbo, Cleveland, Baumgartner, Zeiger, O'Ban, Lias, Frockt, Schoesler, Hobbs, Kuderer, Conway and Bailey.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the public four-year institutions of higher education to employ a minimum of one full-time licensed mental health counselor with experience working with active military members or military veterans to work with student, faculty, and staff veterans and their families, subject to appropriation of funds for this specific purpose.

Hearing Date: 3/20/17

Staff: Lily Sobolik (786-7157).

Background:

Public Institutions of Higher Education.

Washington has six public four-year institutions of higher education (IHEs): the University of Washington, Washington State University, Eastern Washington University, Central Washington University, Western Washington University, and The Evergreen State College. The state appropriates funding to each of these institutions separately.

Resources for Veterans in Public Institutions of Higher Education.

Applications for admission to IHEs must provide the opportunity for applicants to indicate if they are veterans who need assistance. The IHEs must also participate in outreach activities to increase the number of veterans who receive institutional waivers of tuition and fees. Each IHE has a center for veterans and their families, typically called a veteran resource center. The centers generally provide information regarding federal and state education benefits, specialized advising and tutoring services, referrals to support services, and social activities.

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.

Licensing for Mental Health Counselors.

The Department of Health licenses mental health counselors. Requirements for receiving licensure include:

- graduation from a master's or doctoral level educational program in mental health counseling, or a related discipline, from an approved IHE;
- successful completion of an approved examination; and
- successful completion of an approved supervised full-time counseling experience at least 36 months in length.

Licenses for mental health counseling must be renewed every year, and every two years 36 hours of continuing education must be completed for renewal.

Summary of Bill:

Subject to appropriations of funding for this specific purpose, each public four-year institution of higher education must employ at least one full-time licensed mental health counselor who has experience working with active members of the military or military veterans. The counselor will work with student, faculty and staff veterans, as well as their spouses and dependents, through each institution's veteran resource center.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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