

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1840

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
College & Workforce Development

**Title:** An act relating to improving diversity, equity, and mental health at the community and technical colleges.

**Brief Description:** Improving diversity, equity, and mental health at the community and technical colleges.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Ortiz-Self, Callan, Macri, Santos, Orwall, Simmons, Chopp, Slatter, Bergquist, Ryu, Valdez, Pollet, Riccelli, Davis, Harris-Talley, Taylor and Frame.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

College & Workforce Development: 1/19/22, 1/27/22 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Establishes a task force to review student financial resources, community outreach, and barriers to accessing needed funds for underrepresented students.
- Expands the Mental Health Counseling and Services Pilot Program to an additional four colleges and extends the expiration date by one additional year.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COLLEGE & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Leavitt, Vice Chair; Hansen, Paul, Pollet and Sells.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Chambers, Ranking Minority Member; Jacobsen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler,

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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 part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Kraft and Sutherland.

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

**Background:**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategic Plans.

In 2020 the Legislature passed Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5194 that required the community and technical colleges (CTCs) to submit on a biennial basis, beginning July 30, 2022, strategic plans for achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion of all races to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). The strategic plans are to be developed using an inclusive stakeholder process, and the CTCs are encouraged to use campus climate surveys. The CTCs were also tasked with establishing culturally appropriate outreach programs to assist students from communities of color, with disabilities, from neurodiverse communities, and low-income communities. The SBCTC was also tasked with developing a model faculty diversity program designed to provide for the retention and recruitment of faculty from all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

Mental Health Counseling and Services Pilot Program.

Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 5194 also established the Mental Health Counseling and Services Pilot Program (pilot program) to increase student access to mental health counseling and services at the CTCs. The SBCTC was tasked with establishing a selection committee to select CTCs to participate in the pilot program. The selection committee established a scoring rubric by which to rank applications. The SBCTC received 25 applications and ultimately selected four CTCs to participate: Grays Harbor College, Lake Washington Institute of Technology, North Seattle College, and Wenatchee Valley College. Each CTC received approximately \$125,000 per year of the biennium to participate and implement strategies to increase access to mental health services. The CTCs must implement one or more of the following strategies to increase access to mental health services:

- improve equity, diversity, and inclusion in counseling services;
- meet mental health needs of students through an all-campus effort;
- engage students to help increase mental health awareness;
- increase visibility of counseling services on campus;
- increase or expand external partnerships with community service providers;
- adopt the use of telebehavioral health;
- develop an assessment of counseling services to inform improvements and ensure counseling services are meeting student needs; and
- implement counseling approaches, grounded in theory, that have evidence of being effective.

The CTCs selected to participate must submit a joint report to the Legislature by November 1, 2023. The pilot program expires July 1, 2025.

## **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

### Task Force.

A task force to review community, state, and federal student financial resources; community outreach; and barriers to accessing needed funds for underrepresented communities is established beginning July 1, 2022. The task force includes 13 members as follows:

- one Senator from each of the two largest caucuses of the Senate, appointed by the President of the Senate;
- one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives;
- two CTC students from colleges where the student population is predominantly racially diverse and are representative of a systemically minoritized population, appointed by the Governor;
- a president of a CTC, appointed by the Governor;
- a faculty member of a CTC faculty collective bargaining unit, appointed by the Governor;
- a CTC diversity and equity officer, appointed by the Governor;
- a director of financial aid at a CTC, appointed by the Governor;
- a multicultural student services director at a CTC, appointed by the Governor;
- the executive director or designee of the SBCTC; and
- the executive director or designee of the Student Achievement Council.

The SBCTC must staff the task force and convene the initial meeting. The task force members are to choose a chair from among the membership. Reimbursement for travel is provided for legislative members and nonlegislative members not participating on behalf of an employer. The task force must examine and make recommendations on how equitable access to financial resources can be attained by students, addressing the following: federal and state financial aid programs, student supports, community outreach, financial education, community resources, and barriers to accessing financial resources.

The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature with a preliminary report due November 1, 2022, and a final report due November 1, 2023. The task force expires July 1, 2024.

### Mental Health Counseling and Services Pilot Program.

The pilot program is expanded to an additional four community or technical colleges, and the expiration date for the program is extended by one year to July 1, 2026.

## **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The Task Force on Improving Equity and Diversity at Community and Technical Colleges is changed to a task force to review community, state, and federal student financial resources, community outreach, and barriers to accessing needed funds for underrepresented communities. The revised task force is established beginning July 1, 2022 and the scope is

changed. The task force's membership is revised slightly. Two additional members are added: a multicultural student services director at a CTC and a director of financial aid at a CTC. The workforce development council member is removed and replaced with a CTC diversity and equity officer. In addition, the student members are to be from colleges where the student population is predominantly racially diverse and must be representative of a systemically minoritized population.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available. New fiscal note requested on January 27, 2022.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) There is a disproportionality that exists in trying to recruit and retain students and faculty of color. These problems still exist today, especially during a pandemic. The intent to make CTCs more inclusive and welcoming is appreciated. The SBCTC and other organizations want to provide support and greater success, but they often lack clear and collaborative plans to provide that support. Fifty percent of CTC students are students of color. The CTC student population is diverse, and many of these students have already experienced severe marginalization. The current faculty pay structure is harmful. Professors are struggling under the high cost of living, student loan debt, and adjunct faculty have to pay for benefits. There is a demoralizing exodus of faculty of color seeking better pay and support. There are barriers which make it harder for faculty of color to serve students and their community. Hiring faculty from more diverse backgrounds better serves the student population, and no one benefits from a revolving door of faculty. When there is an equitable environment, everyone succeeds.

There are already efforts underway to improve diversity and equity based on legislation passed last year, so the role of the task force might need to be addressed. Equity and diversity officers should also be added to the task force.

The need for mental health services is great and expanding access is critical. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a secondary mental health crisis in the country. It does not discriminate and is affecting everyone. Anxiety has increased from 6.9 percent to 37 percent. Severe depression has increased from 7 percent to 30 percent. The prolonged isolation, the burden of caring for children, and the grief of losing loved ones has all contributed to this crisis. Not all colleges have counselors, and yet students who are struggling need to be able to access help. There are fewer counselors available in the surrounding communities as well. Therapy makes someone feel heard, supported, and worthy. Access to mental health services helps retain students.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Lillian Ortiz-Self, prime sponsor; HyeEun Park, America Federation of Teachers Washington; Evans Kaame, Communities for Our Colleges Coalition and Washington Student Association; Jaspreet Singh; Sequoia Dolan; Xochilt Lopez, Communities for Our Colleges; Dulce Estrada; Nancy Cruz, Communities for Our Colleges and Connection Bridge Club; Annemarie Solbrack, Clover Park Technical College American Federation of Teachers Local 3913; Ha Nguyen and Christine McMullin, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Nicole Wilson; Sai Ramaswamy, Wenatchee Valley College Association for Higher Education, Washington Education Association; Bevyn Rowland, Clark College Association of Higher Education, Washington Education Association; Lexi Hanson, Washington Student Association, Associated Students of the University of Washington Bothell; and Kushlani de Soyza, Clark College Association of Higher Education.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.