

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5892

As Reported by House Committee On:
Health Care & Wellness

Title: An act relating to establishing pilot projects for utilizing high school student nursing assistant-certified programs to address the nursing workforce shortage and promote nursing careers in rural hospitals.

Brief Description: Establishing pilot projects for utilizing high school student nursing assistant-certified programs to address the nursing workforce shortage and promote nursing careers in rural hospitals.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Brown, Conway, Honeyford, King, Lovick, Short, Van De Wege, Warnick, Wellman, Wilson, C., Wilson, J. and Wilson, L.).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 2/16/22, 2/21/22 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission to establish at least two pilot projects to address workforce shortages and promote nursing careers in rural hospitals by allowing rural hospitals to use high school students who are training to become certified nursing assistants or who are certified nursing assistants.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Bateman, Vice Chair; Schmick, Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bronoske, Davis, Harris, Macri, Maycumber, Riccelli, Rude, Simmons, Stonier, Tharinger and Ybarra.

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.

Staff: Christopher Blake (786-7392).

Background:

The Department of Health issues credentials to nursing assistants at two levels: registered nursing assistants and certified nursing assistants. A person may become a registered nursing assistant by submitting an information form to the Department of Health and paying a fee. To become a certified nursing assistant, a person must complete an approved training program or alternative training program that meets the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission's criteria and complete a competency evaluation. The curriculum for training programs for certified nursing assistants, other than an alternative training program, must be competency based and include a minimum of 85 hours total, with at least 35 hours of classroom training and at least 50 hours of clinical training.

Nursing assistants assist in the delivery of nursing and nursing-related activities to patients in a health care facility. Nursing assistants work under the direction and supervision of registered nurses and licensed practical nurses. Both categories of nursing assistants must meet certain competencies related to basic technical skills, personal care skills, mental health and social service needs, care of cognitively impaired residents, basic restorative services, client or resident rights and promotion of independence, communication and interpersonal skills, infection control, safety and emergency procedures, and rules and regulations knowledge. Registered nursing assistants may not provide care until they have demonstrated skills necessary to competently perform all assigned duties and responsibilities.

Summary of Bill:

The Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (Commission) must establish at least two pilot projects to address workforce shortages and promote nursing careers in rural hospitals by allowing rural hospitals to use high school students who are training to become certified nursing assistants or who are certified nursing assistants. The Commission must establish the pilot projects in collaboration with rural hospitals, certified nursing assistant training programs, and the Department of Labor and Industries. At least one rural hospital from each side of the Cascade Mountains must participate in the pilot projects.

The pilot projects must prioritize using certified nursing assistant high school students to their full scope of practice and identify any barriers to doing so. The Commission may contract with a nursing consultant and a health services consultant to assist in establishing and supporting the pilot projects.

Beginning December 1, 2023, the Commission must annually report to the health care committees of the Legislature on the status of the pilot projects and any findings and recommendations. The pilot projects expire June 30, 2025.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Hospital employees, particularly nurses, are stressed and overworked. Some rural hospitals suggested that it would be helpful to have high school students enter the nursing pipeline. This program will help rural hospitals and rural areas of the state that are struggling. The workforce crisis is most acute in rural communities. These pilot projects can ease the nursing shortage in rural areas and encourage high school students to become certified nursing assistants. Nursing assistants provide a critical role in health care delivery and the profession is a career pathway for those wishing to pursue health care careers. If a person becomes a certified nursing assistant, it is more likely that they will become a registered nurse or a doctor. This bill aligns with work the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission is already doing to create pathways for nursing assistants to enter nursing careers, especially in rural areas. Fiscal considerations that had been previously raised have been included in this version of the bill.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Sharon Brown, prime sponsor; Amy Anderson, Association of Washington Business; and Kathy Moasio, Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.