

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESHB 2256

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As of February 19, 2024

**Title:** An act relating to the children and youth behavioral health work group.

**Brief Description:** Addressing the children and youth behavioral health work group.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning (originally sponsored by Representatives Callan, Eslick, Senn, Davis, Paul, Thai, Ormsby, Pollet and Macri).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/12/24, 93-4.

**Committee Activity:** Human Services: 2/19/24.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Modifies membership and requirements for the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group (work group).
- Extends the expiration of the work group from December 30, 2026, to December 30, 2029.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

**Staff:** Kelsey-anne Fung (786-7479)

**Background:** The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group (work group) was established in statute in 2018 to identify barriers to and opportunities for accessing behavioral health services for children and their families and advise the Legislature on statewide behavioral health services for this population.

There are currently 38 members of this work group, including legislators, representatives from state agencies, providers, parent and child representatives, and advocates. The cochairs of the work group are selected by the work group members and must include one legislative

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member and one executive branch member.

At the direction of the cochairs of the work group, the work group may convene advisory groups to evaluate specific issues and report related findings and recommendations to the full work group. The work group must convene an advisory group focused on school-based behavioral health and suicide prevention and an advisory group to develop a behavioral health strategic plan. The strategic plan advisory group must complete the plan by October 1, 2024.

The work group must submit annual recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature. The work group expires December 30, 2026.

**Summary of Bill: Purpose.** The purpose of the work group is expanded to include to strengthen and build a coordinated systemic approach to providing behavioral health care and supports that ensure that all children, youth, young adults, and their families have timely access to high quality, equitable, well-resourced behavioral health education, care, and supports across the continuum when and where they need it, including prenatal care.

**Members.** The membership of the work group expanded and modified to:

- include three youth or young adult representatives with experience with behavioral health services;
- add a member representing educational service districts;
- allow the cochairs of the work group to request that the Governor appoint additional members, and allow the Governor to consult with the cochairs on these discretionary appointments;
- specify one of the cochairs must be the representative from the Health Care Authority (HCA), rather than from the executive branch members; and
- limit newly appointed members to three year terms and allow existing members to remain in their positions until January 1, 2027.

**Duties.** The duties of the work group are expanded to include determining strategies and resources needed to achieve parity of private health insurance coverage for behavioral health conditions with the coverage provided for other health conditions.

**School-Based Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention Advisory Group.** The school-based behavioral health and suicide prevention advisory group must consider the broader behavioral health issues impacting children, youth, and families, while focusing on the issues unique to children and families that interface with schools. The tiered support framework that the advisory group must advise on includes preschool through 12th grade, instead of kindergarten through 12th grade.

**Strategic Plan Advisory Group.** The work group cochairs must appoint a chair for the strategic plan advisory group. The requirement for the strategic plan advisory group to select certain third-party entities by December 31, 2022, and the requirement for the

strategic plan to include an incremental action plan, are removed. The strategic plan must be developed in coordination with the Joint Legislative and Executive Committee on Behavior Health, Department of Health, and HCA as it relates to implementation of the 988 Crisis Hotline. The due date for the advisory group to complete the plan is changed from October 1, 2024, to August 1, 2025.

Dates. The requirement for the work group to include in its annual report a discussion of how the work group's recommendations align with the strategic plan is delayed from beginning November 1, 2025, to November 1, 2026. The expiration date for the work group is delayed from December 30, 2026, to December 30, 2029.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** Yes.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The work group has been effective at making sure progress is being made to delivering behavioral health services to children and families when and where they need it. The current strategic plan work of the work group aligns with the bill and last year's bill. This bill makes sure the work group continues its good work and is focused on the strategic plan coming in 2025. The bill also include technical fixes to make sure voices from all sectors that provide or receive behavioral health services are at the table. The work group is moving the youth behavioral health system out of crisis and promoting well-being and early prevention services across the full spectrum from prenatal to age 25.

The strategic plan is critical to ensuring improvement efforts are aligned with the statewide vision. The creation of an inclusive and thoughtful strategic plan takes time to ensure collaboration with other strategic planning efforts. A statewide plan that is informed by lived experience is necessary to address the behavioral health crisis. The work group is an imperative part of the behavioral health community and the work done so far has been relevant and impactful. The work group is supporting and representing families and giving voice to future work. Giving more time to work on the plan will allow for more strategic collaboration so there is intentional equity. Extending the work group through 2029 ensures families today have a better journey and experience with the behavioral health system than they did in the past.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Lisa Callan, Prime Sponsor; Kashika Arora, Seattle Children's; Karen Kelly; Taanvi Arekapudi, Uplift Teens Today.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.