
SENATE BILL 5666

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senators Slatter, Hasegawa, Nobles, and Valdez

Read first time 02/05/25. Referred to Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing a public school-based mental
2 health internship grant program; adding new sections to chapter
3 28B.77 RCW; and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that school
6 psychologists are an integral part of supporting student learning,
7 mental health, and behavior to help students achieve academically,
8 socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. School psychologists work to
9 reduce barriers to student success by enhancing psychological and
10 educational support, including specialized knowledge of students'
11 rights. The national association of school psychologists recommends a
12 maximum ratio of 500 students per school psychologist to provide a
13 comprehensive range of school psychological services. There is a
14 shortage of school psychologists in the state, which jeopardizes the
15 state's ability to provide essential services, such as direct
16 behavioral health services, and to provide support to students,
17 schools, and communities. Data indicates that shortages of school
18 psychologists will persist into the future and that there is an
19 insufficient number of credentialed school psychology graduates
20 produced by the state's higher education institutions to fill
21 existing gaps. The legislature further finds that initiatives

1 designed to promote and support the education and preparation of
2 school psychologists can help mitigate this shortage, such as
3 increasing the availability of high-quality internships. Research and
4 best practice show that after three years of employment within a
5 school, school psychologists become embedded in their community,
6 resulting in lower turnover within the profession.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
8 RCW to read as follows:

9 (1) The public school-based mental health internship grant
10 program is established to support school districts, educational
11 service districts, charter schools, and state-tribal education
12 compact schools to attract and pay full-time school psychology
13 interns participating in an accredited school psychology training
14 program.

15 (2) In administering the program, the council shall:

16 (a) Coordinate with school districts, educational service
17 districts, charter schools, and state-tribal education compact
18 schools to identify school districts and schools that have qualified
19 supervisors who can support school psychology internships in
20 partnership with an institution of higher education;

21 (b) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
22 specific purpose, allocate program funds to school districts,
23 educational service districts, charter schools, and state-tribal
24 education compact schools, through a competitive process, for one-
25 year internship grants equal to either: 75 percent of the entry-level
26 salary of a school psychologist in the district or school; or 75
27 percent of the entry-level salary of an educator with a master's
28 degree and 45 credits in the district;

29 (c) Establish eligibility criteria to receive an internship grant
30 under the program, which must include requirements that a recipient:

31 (i) Is enrolled in a school psychologist preparation program at
32 an institution of higher education; and

33 (ii) Is placed as an intern at a school district, educational
34 service district, charter school, or state-tribal education compact
35 school that employs a qualified supervisor; and

36 (d) Establish an advisory committee, which may include school
37 counselors and school nurses, to assist in the implementation of the
38 program. The advisory committee shall:

1 (i) Make recommendations regarding the funding for internship
2 grants that reflect barriers to becoming a school-based mental health
3 professional and the best practices of internships in other states;
4 and

5 (ii) Include representatives of school psychologist preparation
6 programs, teacher preparation programs, and representatives of
7 diverse communities.

8 (3) For purposes of this section, the following definitions
9 apply:

10 (a) "Educator" means a teacher, paraeducator, principal,
11 administrator, superintendent, school counselor, school psychologist,
12 school social worker, school nurse, school physical therapist, school
13 occupational therapist, behavioral analyst, orientation or mobility
14 specialist, or school speech-language pathologist or audiologist.

15 (b) "School psychologist" has the same meaning as described in
16 RCW 28A.410.044.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
18 RCW to read as follows:

19 (1) In compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the council, in
20 consultation with the office of superintendent of public instruction,
21 shall report to the legislature by December 1, 2026, and by December
22 1st annually thereafter, on career data for school psychologists and
23 outcomes of the public school-based mental health internship grant
24 program established in section 2 of this act. The data must include:

25 (a) School psychologists and other licensed professionals
26 providing school psychology services employed and contracted in the
27 state;

28 (b) School psychologists and other licensed professionals
29 providing school psychology services employed and contracted in
30 person and remotely;

31 (c) The number of grant applicants;

32 (d) The number of grants and grant amounts awarded; and

33 (e) Demographic data on grant recipients.

34 (2) The report must be made publicly available on the website of
35 the council.

36 (3) For purposes of this section, "school psychologist" has the
37 same meaning as described in RCW 28A.410.044.

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