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**SENATE BILL 5335**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Keiser, McAuliffe, Kohl-Welles, and Mullet

AN ACT Relating to the nurse educator pay it forward program; and adding a new chapter to Title 28B RCW.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature recognizes the increasing need for health care providers, including nurses, in Washington and that there is a growing demand to educate and train more nurses as well as advancing the education of current nurses. The legislature finds that there is a growing shortage of nurse educators in Washington and across the country to meet the growing demand for more educators.

(2) The legislature finds that due to a limited pool of prepared candidates, nursing programs in the state experience difficulty hiring and retaining qualified nursing faculty members.

(3) The legislature recognizes that nursing faculty positions require candidates to have at least a master's degree, while a great majority of nursing faculty programs strongly prefer that candidates hold a doctoral degree. The expensive upfront cost of tuition for master's and doctoral degree programs can be a significant barrier to registered nurses seeking to advance their education to become nursing faculty members. Therefore, the legislature recognizes that it is in the state's interest to develop a pay it forward program for nurse educators to assist registered nurses in becoming nursing faculty members.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Council" means the student achievement council.

(2) "Full-time work" means the definition of full-time as defined by the Washington nursing education program in which the participant is employed.

(3) "Nurse educator" means a registered nurse who holds a graduate degree in nursing or related field and is responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating curricula for nursing students in the classroom and clinical settings.

(4) "Nursing commission" means the Washington state nursing commission.

(5) "Pay it forward" means a financing model that allows students to return to college without upfront payments as long as a contractual requirement is signed that requires the student to pay a portion of his or her income for a set period of time and meet a service requirement as repayment six months after graduating.

(6) "Qualifying program" means the program must be accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency and be one of the following:

(a) A master's degree program in nursing or nursing science;

(b) A doctor of philosophy program in nursing or any related field;

(c) A doctor of education program in nursing or any related field;

(d) A doctor of nursing practice program; or

(e) A doctor of nursing science program.

(7) "Service requirement" means five years of full-time work as a nurse educator in a Washington nursing education program that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The nurse educator pay it forward program is created for the purpose of providing greater access to higher education for registered nurses pursuing careers as nurse educators. The nurse educator pay it forward program shall be developed and implemented by the council in collaboration with the nursing commission. In administering the program, the council may adopt necessary rules and guidelines. In considering the rules and guidelines, the council shall include rules or exceptions as are necessary to address hardship cases or extenuating circumstances.

(2) Eligible students who choose to participate in the nurse educator pay it forward program and who are enrolled in a qualifying program at an institution of higher education in Washington shall receive funds for its qualifying program's tuition and fees, less any awards the student may receive through financial aid excluding student loans and work-study. These funds shall be distributed by the council to the student's institution of higher education in the name of the student.

(a) The nurse educator pay it forward program shall be available for up to fifty full-time equivalent slots per year at qualifying programs. The council shall develop an application for participation and determine a method for choosing participants should the number of applications exceed the program capacity of fifty full-time equivalents per year.

(b) Students are eligible to participate in the nurse educator pay it forward program for up to the equivalent of five academic years at full-time enrollment while maintaining satisfactory academic progress for financial aid purposes.

(c) Students attending private institutions of higher education are entitled to participate in the nurse educator pay it forward program. They are eligible to receive up to the portion of their tuition and fees that is equivalent to the tuition and fees at the most expensive institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016 for an equivalent qualifying program.

(3) Students choosing to participate in the nurse educator pay it forward program shall sign a binding contract obligating them to make contributions to the nurse educator pay it forward account created in section 4 of this act. Nurse educator pay it forward program participants shall start making contributions six months following graduation or discontinuation of their postsecondary program. The amount participants are required to contribute and the length of time participants are required to contribute must be determined by the council in collaboration with the nursing commission and within the parameters of this subsection.

(a) Before January 1st of each year, the council shall seek to set contribution rates for the upcoming academic year's cohort based on the following:

(i) For participants who have all of their qualifying program credits financed through the nurse educator pay it forward program, the council and the nursing commission shall seek to set the contribution rate between three and eight percent of participants' income;

(ii) Within a cohort, each individual participant's contribution rate shall be prorated according to the proportion of total credits, or equivalent, that the nurse educator pay it forward program funded for the participant.

(b) Before January 1st of each year, the council shall seek to set the contribution period for the upcoming academic year's cohort between ten and fifteen years following graduation or upon leaving the institution of higher education, with the exception of participants who do not meet their service requirement described in subsection (5) of this section. Notwithstanding the service requirement, participants shall not be required to make contributions for a period longer than twenty years.

(4) Students eligible to participate are students enrolled in a qualifying program, who are also participating in a nurse educator track or nurse educator certificate program, if offered, and, if no such track or program is offered, who plan to become employed as nurse educators as a result of their participation in the qualifying program.

(5) All participants in the nurse educator pay it forward program shall, within their contribution period, complete the equivalent of five years of full-time work as a nurse educator to meet the service requirement for the nurse educator pay it forward program. If, by the end of the original contribution period, a participant has not completed the equivalent of five years of full-time work as a nurse educator, the participant is required to continue contributions until the service requirement is met, not to exceed a maximum contribution period of twenty years.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The nurse educator pay it forward account is created in the custody of the state treasurer. The primary purpose of the account is for disbursements to participants in the nurse educator pay it forward program created in section 3 of this act, and for the receipt of pay it forward contributions from participants, as provided in subsection (2) of this section.

(2) All receipts from the nurse educator pay it forward program under section 3 of this act must be deposited in the account. The account shall consist of funds appropriated by the legislature for the nurse educator pay it forward program, contributions to the nurse educator pay it forward program by nurse educator pay it forward participants, and private contributions, including principal and interest. Moneys deposited in the account do not lapse at the close of the fiscal period for which they were appropriated. Both during and after the fiscal period in which moneys were deposited in the account, the council may expend moneys in the account only for the purposes of the nurse educator pay it forward program.

(3) Expenditures from the account may be used only for the nurse educator pay it forward program according to the program's rules and policies.

(4) Only the council may authorize expenditures from the account.

(5) Disbursements from the account are exempt from appropriations and the allotment provisions of chapter 43.88 RCW.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The nurse educator pay it forward program disbursements are established subject to appropriations. The council shall establish the program within existing funds.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 1 through 5 of this act constitute a new chapter in Title 28B RCW.

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