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**HOUSE BILL 1840**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

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

AN ACT Relating to improving diversity, equity, and mental health at the community and technical colleges; amending RCW 28B.50.930; creating new sections; and providing expiration dates.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  It is the legislature's intent to further the effort to make community and technical colleges more welcoming and inclusive for all students by continuing to build on previous legislative efforts to improve diversity, equity, and mental health. Therefore, the legislature intends to establish a task force to examine the ways that diversity and equity can be improved at the state's community and technical colleges while expanding the pilot program to increase student access to mental health counseling and services.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The task force on improving equity and diversity at community and technical colleges is established.

(1) The task force shall include the following members:

(a) The president of the senate shall appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives shall appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the house of representatives. One of the legislative members must also be a member of the workforce education investment accountability and oversight board under RCW 28C.18.200;

(b) The governor shall appoint five members representing diverse populations in the community and technical college sector from recommendations made by the college board as defined in RCW 28B.50.030 as follows:

(i) Two community and technical college students selected from colleges where the student population is at least 40 percent students from historically underrepresented populations;

(ii) A president of a community and technical college;

(iii) A faculty member of a community and technical college faculty collective bargaining unit; and

(iv) A member of a local or regional workforce development council;

(c) The executive director or designee of the college board as defined in RCW 28B.50.030; and

(d) The executive director or designee of the student achievement council under chapter 28B.77 RCW.

(2) The task force shall choose its chair from among its membership. The college board shall convene the initial meeting of the task force.

(3) The task force shall examine and make recommendations on how equity and diversity can be improved at the community and technical colleges, especially regarding the following:

(a) Faculty compensation and benefits;

(b) Faculty recruitment and retention;

(c) Student persistence and completion, especially for historically underrepresented students, students with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQ population, as defined in RCW 43.114.010;

(d) Financial aid programs and student supports; and

(e) How diversity and equity are addressed by higher education state agencies, institutions, and statutorily created boards.

(4) Staff support for the task force shall be provided by the college board as defined in RCW 28B.50.030.

(5) Legislative members of the task force are reimbursed for travel expenses in accordance with RCW 44.04.120. Nonlegislative members are not entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses if they are elected officials or are participating on behalf of an employer, governmental entity, or other organization. Any reimbursement for other nonlegislative members is subject to chapter 43.03 RCW.

(6) The task force shall report its findings and recommendations to the governor and the appropriate committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036. The task force shall submit a preliminary report by November 1, 2022, and a final report to the legislature by November 1, 2023.

(7) This section expires July 1, 2024.

**Sec.**  RCW 28B.50.930 and 2021 c 272 s 6 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the college board shall administer a pilot program to increase student access to mental health counseling and services.

(2) The college board, in collaboration with the selection committee, shall select community or technical colleges to participate in the pilot program. For the 2022-23 academic year, the college board shall select an additional four community or technical colleges to participate in the pilot program. At least half of the participating colleges must be located outside of the Puget Sound area. For purposes of this section, "Puget Sound area" means Snohomish, King, Pierce, and Thurston counties. Each participating college must receive a grant to implement one or more strategies to increase student access to mental health counseling and services, including substance use disorder counseling and services.

(3)(a) A selection committee consisting of the following shall assist with the application selection process:

(i) One community or technical college president;

(ii) One community or technical college vice president for student services or student instruction;

(iii) Two faculty counselors employed at a community or technical college; and

(iv) One community or technical college student.

(b) The selection committee may consult with representatives of an entity within a college or university that has expertise in suicide prevention and the department of health in developing selection criteria.

(4) Community and technical colleges wishing to participate in the pilot program shall apply to the college board. Applicants must identify opportunities for expanding on-campus mental health counseling and services. Applicants must also show a commitment to further develop partnerships by engaging external community providers, including those who provide crisis services and substance use disorder treatment and counseling. Applications that demonstrate plans to include one or more of the following strategies recommended by the community and technical college counselors task force must be prioritized:

(a) Improve equity, diversity, and inclusion of all races in counseling services, such as by diversifying the counselor workforce by adopting equity-centered recruiting, training, and retention practices or by providing equity training and awareness for all counselors;

(b) Meet mental health needs of students through an all-campus effort;

(c) Engage students to help increase mental health and counseling awareness and promote help-seeking behavior through student groups and other methods;

(d) Increase the visibility of counseling services on campus;

(e) Increase or expand external partnerships with community service providers;

(f) Adopt the use of telebehavioral health, especially in underresourced communities;

(g) Develop an assessment of counseling services to inform improvements and ensure counseling services are meeting student needs; or

(h) Implement counseling approaches grounded in theory that have evidence of being effective.

(5) Colleges selected to participate in the pilot program that use grant funding to hire additional mental health counselors must hire counselors who have specific graduate-level training for meeting the mental and behavioral health needs of students.

(6) Colleges selected to participate in the pilot program shall submit a joint report to the appropriate committees of the legislature and in accordance with RCW 43.01.036 by November 1, 2023. The report must include:

(a) Information on which colleges were selected for the pilot program, how much grant funding was received per college, and what strategies each implemented to increase student access to mental health counseling and services;

(b) Demographic data of students accessing mental health counseling and services, including those students who are considered underrepresented or traditionally have limited access to mental health counseling and services;

(c) Whether the mental health counseling and services provided are meeting the demand of students in terms of type and availability, and whether the various types of mental health counseling and services are being provided by community providers versus on-campus services;

(d) Information and data on the effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness, of each strategy used to increase student access to mental health counseling and services, including substance use disorder counseling and services, such as the number of additional students served, reduced wait times for counseling appointments, or other data that reflects expanded access; and

(e) Lessons learned and recommendations for improving student access to mental health counseling and services at community and technical colleges and to community providers, including whether there were any strategies implemented that proved more effective than others in increasing access.

(7) Colleges selected for the pilot program shall conspicuously post on their websites and include in the report to the legislature the definitions for key terms including: Diversity, equity, inclusion, culturally competent, culturally appropriate, historically marginalized communities, communities of color, low-income communities, and community organizations.

(8) The pilot program expires July 1, ((~~2025~~)) 2026.

(9) This section expires January 1, ((~~2026~~)) 2027.

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