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**HOUSE BILL 1872**

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

**By** Representatives Senn, Slatter, Berry, Leavitt, Santos, Sells, Simmons, Bronoske, Shewmake, Taylor, Chopp, Ramel, Callan, Riccelli, Lekanoff, Bateman, Macri, Harris-Talley, Valdez, Duerr, and Pollet

AN ACT Relating to establishing the care worker center to promote caregiving professions; adding a new section to chapter 28C.18 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature recognizes that care workers provide support to others who are not able to fully care for themselves or live independently without support, fulfilling a critical and essential industry. Care workers are paid to support individuals in their homes, in the community, in the workplace, and in classroom settings. By providing support to an individual or a small group in need of care, these care workers improve the lives of the recipients by attending to their specific needs, assisting them with their daily tasks, and when possible, helping them to transition to higher levels of independence and community engagement. Care workers work with children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and others with significant barriers. The legislature identifies the importance of having a diverse care worker workforce that reflects the diversity of the recipients receiving care as this positively impacts patient care, educational outcomes, and service for historically underrepresented and marginalized groups.

(2) The legislature also recognizes that the need for paid care workers is expected to grow over the next 20 years, only adding to the existing and looming crisis of workforce shortages. These jobs cannot be internationally outsourced and there will always be a need for care workers. Addressing language and cultural barriers in these professions is a place where the state can make headway in communication with, recruiting from, and meeting the unique needs of diverse communities' cultures and languages.

(3) The legislature also recognizes that care workers are among some of the lowest paid professions in the labor market. Currently, these positions offer little room for economic advancement and rarely offer employee benefits. Additionally, care worker schedules can be unpredictable, making it difficult to supplement income with other jobs or to go to school to prepare for higher paid employment opportunities. Erratic schedules and low incomes can also burden families and cause chaos to home and family life. This historically low pay and limited access to benefits discourages many people from entering and remaining in the field, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, improvements in career progression and advancement opportunities are essential to attracting and retaining care workers to the field.

(4) It is the legislature's intent to support the career, economic, and professional success of care workers in order to improve health, safety, and social outcomes of the individuals receiving care as well as the employees. These care workers are essential to the state's economy and the population's well-being. Therefore, the legislature is establishing the care worker center to help promote career pathways, provide research and marketing to support recruitment, make recommendations for strategies to streamline education pathways and increase access to coursework, and identify and promote support services for care workers.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28C.18 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The board shall establish a care worker center with the purpose of elevating care workers as a respected sector of the workforce, increasing retention and recruitment into care worker fields, and promoting the value and different employment options of a care worker. The board shall establish the care worker center as an online central portal of knowledge, research, resources, and best practices for care workers to be used by care workers, employers, high school counselors, postsecondary education and training providers, and policymakers.

(2) The care worker center shall initially focus on three caregiving professions: Child care, long-term care, and personal care attendants for people with disabilities. Within the first two years of establishment, the board shall set up the care worker center with staff and an online portal, conduct an introductory marketing campaign, and work with appropriate state, private, labor, and community stakeholders involved with child care or long-term care for people with disabilities or older adults to fulfill the duties of the care worker center.

(3) As administrators of the care worker center, the board, in consultation with care worker stakeholders and agencies holding administrative authority over the various elements of workforce education and training, financial aid, workforce development, and occupational licensing and regulation, shall have the following duties for the care worker center:

(a) Establish an online resource center linking care workers to information about free and low-cost services or other resources to support the well-being of care workers and their families;

(b) Identify similarities and differences across care worker occupations, including commonalities across licensing requirements, to facilitate worker mobility across care worker professions;

(c) Research and analyze labor force data on the various care worker sectors, including educational output and expected job vacancies;

(d) Track turnover rates and conduct surveys to better understand the reasons why care workers remain in the occupation, why care workers leave the occupation, and ideas for increasing care worker retention;

(e) Maintain a searchable repository of research and periodically disseminate summaries of latest findings;

(f) Perform research and analysis on trends within Washington state including, but not limited to, numbers and demographics of care workers in each subfield, care workers' professional trajectories, care workers' health and longevity on the job, the outcomes and impacts that care worker interventions have on recipients of care, income and benefit trends among care workers, and impacts of care worker shortages on communities, families, and workplaces;

(g) Promote greater numbers of employees, better customer outcomes, increased worker retention, the value of working as a care worker, and encourage development of the care worker sector;

(h) Establish online career navigation resources that include links to information about career and educational guidance, benefits information, job search assistance, and referrals to services that can be used by worksource centers, career navigators, school counselors, employment coaches, libraries, and others to assist care workers;

(i) Develop policy recommendations specific to maintaining, supporting, and increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the care worker fields. This may include additional language supports for English language learners, evidence-based practices in cultural competency in education and support materials, and exploring opportunities for career progression in care worker professions;

(j) Map care worker skill sets, competencies, abilities, and experiences to job progression opportunities and identify areas where additional occupational licensing categories or education and training credentials are needed in order to attain new opportunities;

(k) Explore opportunities and make recommendations to increase access, flexibility, and affordability of education and training for care workers;

(l) Administer a transformation grant pilot program to promote new care practice methods and ideas to transform the care worker sector and develop metrics and reporting mechanisms to track progress and outcomes of the transformation grants; and

(m) Develop, collect, and disseminate data, information, results, and best practices regarding care workers for the purpose of providing policy recommendations to facilitate care worker transformation and improve recruitment and retention.

(4) The board shall report to the appropriate committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036 by September 1st of the first year of each biennium, beginning with September 1, 2022, on the following:

(a) The progress of meeting the goals of the care worker center;

(b) The results of the transformation grant pilot program; and

(c) Policy and practice recommendations based on the research and data collected throughout the phases.

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