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**SENATE BILL 5777**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Brown, Darneille, Walsh, Nguyen, O'Ban, Wilson, C., and Wilson, L.

AN ACT Relating to building capacity within the educator workforce to improve student mental health and well-being; amending RCW 28A.413.050; adding a new section to chapter 28A.630 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.410 RCW; adding new sections to chapter 28A.415 RCW; creating new sections; providing an effective date; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature acknowledges:

(1) The mental health and well-being of students in Washington schools is of utmost importance to improve academic learning, social-emotional learning, school safety, and success in school and life. Building a safe and supportive school climate where students feel a deep sense of belonging takes intentional, coordinated work by educators demonstrating shared knowledge and skills.

(2) School districts have come to depend on educators and other school staff to be on the front lines of behavioral and mental health services for students. However, educators in Washington's public schools bring varying skills and expertise. In some situations, educators are expected to provide services for which they are not trained or qualified. In other situations, their knowledge, skills, and commitment are underutilized.

(3) Professional learning for educators and other school staff to address mental health and well-being of students is widely variable across the state and is without specific standards or a consistent approach. The need for robust training and educator demonstration of competency in these areas is critical to address the mental health and well-being of students in the classroom. The educator workforce must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to build competency and be responsive to the changing needs of students in Washington schools.

(4) Professional learning through microcredentials focused both on training and demonstration of skills in the classroom is intended to ensure educators are prepared to address student mental health and social and emotional needs. Microcredentials are standards-based and require educators to demonstrate evidence of meeting specific knowledge, skills, and competencies. In addition, professional learning through an online mental health first aid program would introduce classified staff to these issues and help prepare all staff to address students' behavioral and mental health needs.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.630 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The professional educator standards board must convene a work group to make recommendations for standards and professional development courses on student mental health and well-being.

(2) The work group must recommend:

(a) Knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to student mental health and well-being, after identifying redundancies and gaps in current educator or paraeducator standards that include student mental health or student well-being. The work group must consider standards related to universal design for learning, trauma-informed practices, culturally sustaining practices, social-emotional learning, mental health literacy, and suicide prevention. The standards must be designed for educators prepared and certified as authorized by the professional educator standards board under chapter 28A.410 RCW and for paraeducators completing certificates authorized under chapter 28A.413 RCW;

(b) A plan or outline for a continuing education program that meets the student mental health and well-being standards recommended under (a) of this subsection. The program may include one or a series of courses that lead to one or more microcredentials. The program may include the courses developed in collaboration with University of Washington Bothell under section 3 of this act. The continuing education program must be appropriate for educators and paraeducators and may include courses differentiated by staff type;

(c) A plan for either: (i) A system of educator and paraeducator supports and incentives, such as professional designations, teacher leadership opportunities, and stipends, designed to promote use of the continuing education program recommended under (b) of this subsection; or (ii) conditioning educator recertification and paraeducator certificate renewal on completion of the continuing education program recommended under (b) of this subsection;

(d) A plan to align required and available professional learning to improve educator and paraeducator competency in supporting student mental health and well-being; and

(e) A system of supports and professional learning needed to provide building administrators the skills needed to lead and implement safe, healthy, and inclusive school climate work.

(3) The members of the work group must include representatives of the following organizations or agencies:

(a) The professional educator standards board;

(b) The paraeducator board;

(c) Educational service districts;

(d) Colleges of education;

(e) State teacher, paraeducator, school counselor, school social worker, principal, and administrator associations;

(f) A career and technical education organization;

(g) A special education advocacy organization;

(h) A community-based organization representing immigrant and refugee communities;

(i) A community-based organization representing communities of color;

(j) A community-based organization providing mental health services in schools;

(k) A community-based organization focused on social-emotional learning;

(l) The educational opportunity gap oversight and accountability committee;

(m) The office of the superintendent of public instruction, including experts on a curriculum related to compassion, resilience, and academic success;

(n) The department of children, youth, and families;

(o) The University of Washington's school mental health assessment, research, and training center;

(p) An organization of mental health experts; and

(q) An organization representing parents of students enrolled in the public school system.

(4)(a) By January 10, 2020, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the work group shall submit a preliminary report to the education committees of the legislature that describes its activities over the prior year and makes recommendations for the adoption of knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to student mental health and well-being.

(b) By January 10, 2021, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the work group shall submit a final report to the education committees of the legislature that describes its activities over the course of the prior year and makes recommendations on the topics listed in subsection (2)(b) through (e) of this section.

(5) This section expires August 1, 2021.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.410 RCW to read as follows:

Based on the recommendations of the work group convened under section 2 of this act, the professional educator standards board must:

(1) Adopt knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to student mental health and well-being;

(2) Beginning July 1, 2022, require that educators prepared and certified under this chapter meet the knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to student mental health and well-being; and

(3) Implement a continuing education program that meets the knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to student mental health and well-being.

**Sec.**  RCW 28A.413.050 and 2017 c 237 s 6 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The board shall adopt state standards of practice for paraeducators that are based on the recommendations of the paraeducator work group established in chapter 136, Laws of 2014. These standards must include:

((~~(1)~~)) (a) Supporting instructional opportunities;

((~~(2)~~)) (b) Demonstrating professionalism and ethical practices;

((~~(3)~~)) (c) Supporting a positive and safe learning environment;

((~~(4)~~)) (d) Communicating effectively and participating in the team process; and

((~~(5)~~)) (e) Demonstrating cultural competency aligned with standards developed by the professional educator standards board under RCW 28A.410.270.

(2) Beginning July 1, 2022, the state standards of practice for paraeducators must include knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to student mental health and well-being that are based on the recommendations of the work group convened under section 2 of this act.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.415 RCW to read as follows:

The professional educator standards board must collaborate with the University of Washington Bothell on the development of a series of online courses for school staff related to behavioral health. The standards for the online courses must be consistent with the knowledge, skill, and performance standards related to student mental health and well-being recommended by the work group convened under section 2 of this act. Among other things, the online courses must: Teach participants relevant laws, including laws around restraint; provide foundational knowledge in behavioral health, mental health, and mental illness; describe how to assess, intervene upon, and refer behavioral health and substance use issues; and teach approaches to promote health and positively influence student health behaviors.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.415 RCW to read as follows:

In either the 2019-20 or 2020-21 school year, and every four years thereafter, school districts must use one of the professional learning days funded under RCW 28A.150.415 to improve the effectiveness of school district staff in addressing student mental health needs and in implementing best practices in social-emotional learning.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  By September 1, 2019, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the professional educator standards board must report to the appropriate committees of the legislature with the outcomes of the social-emotional learning microcredential piloted in four educator preparation programs in the 2018-19 school year. The report must describe the content of and standards for the program, include the number of program participants and the number who earned a microcredential, and summarize any feedback received from program participants and preparation programs implementing the program. The report must also examine any barriers to implementing the social-emotional learning microcredential more broadly.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 3 and 4 of this act take effect July 1, 2021.

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