
College & Workforce Development Committee

SSB 5428

Brief Description: Concerning veterans' mental health services at institutions of higher education.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson, L., Palumbo, Becker, Brown, Wagoner, Warnick, Nguyen and Zeiger).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the public baccalaureate institutions to employ at least one full-time mental health counselor with experience and training working with active duty military and veterans.

Hearing Date: 3/19/19

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Resources for Veterans in Public Institutions of Higher Education.

Higher education institutions must provide on admission's applications the opportunity for applicants to indicate if they are veterans who need assistance. The institutions must also participate in outreach activities to increase the number of veterans who receive tuition waivers. Each institution has a center for veterans and their families, typically called a veteran resource center. The centers generally provide information regarding federal and state education benefits, specialized advising and tutoring services, referrals to support services, and social activities.

Mental Health Counselors.

A mental health counselor is someone who applies principles of human development, learning theory, psychotherapy, group dynamics, and etiology of mental illness and dysfunction behavior

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to individuals, families, groups, or organizations, for the purpose of treating mental disorders and promoting optimal mental health functionality. Mental health counselors must have: (1) a master's or doctoral level degree in mental health counseling; (2) completed state examination requirements; and (3) a minimum of 36 months of full-time supervised counseling.

Summary of Bill:

Subject to appropriation, the public baccalaureate institutions must employ at least one full-time, licensed mental health counselor with experience and training specific to working with active duty military and veterans. The counselor must be accessible through, but not necessarily located in, the institution's veteran resource center. The counselor must prioritize working with student veterans, and the institution's veteran resource center must make available information about other agencies' mental health services to veterans, spouses, and dependents.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.