
College & Workforce Development Committee

HB 1468

Brief Description: Increasing student access to mental health counseling and services at community and technical colleges.

Sponsors: Representatives Slatter, Ortiz-Self, Ryu, Leavitt, Simmons, Senn, Johnson, J., Berry, Valdez, Santos, Boehnke, Berg, Peterson, Goodman, Fey, Ormsby, Ramel, Pollet, Davis, Thai, Bronoske, Chopp, Hackney and Riccelli.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a pilot program to provide grants to community and technical colleges to increase student access to mental health counseling and services.

Hearing Date: 2/8/21

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

In 2019, Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1355 established the Community and Technical Colleges Counselors Task Force (Task Force). The Task Force was required to address how community and technical colleges (CTCs) will meet the mental health needs of students and to examine three issues: minimum standards required for counselors, staffing ratios, and best practices. The Task Force's sub-committee on best practices recommended a list of eight strategies to improve student access to mental health services. Those strategies are:

- improve equity, diversity, and inclusion in counseling services;
- meet mental health needs of students through on all-campus effort;

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- engage students to help increase mental health awareness;
- increase visibility of counseling services on campus;
- increase or expand external partnerships with community service providers;
- adopt the use of tele-behavioral health;
- develop an assessment of counseling services to inform improvements and ensure counseling services are meeting student needs; or
- implement counseling approaches, grounded in theory, that have evidence of being effective.

Summary of Bill:

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) must establish a pilot program to increase student access to mental health counseling and services. The SBCTC must provide grants to eight CTCs, half located outside the Puget Sound area, to implement one or more strategies to increase access to mental health counseling and services. The CTCs wishing to participate in the pilot program must apply. The selection committee must prioritize applicants that demonstrate a partnership with external community providers and demonstrate plans to implement one or more of the eight strategies identified by the Task Force.

Applicants will be selected by the SBCTC, in consultation with a selection committee consisting of one CTC President, one CTC Vice President for Student Services or Student Instruction, two CTC faculty counselors, and one CTC student. In addition, the selection committee may consult with representatives of the Department of Health and Forefront Suicide Prevention at the University of Washington.

Those CTCs selected to participate in the pilot program must submit a joint report to the Legislature by November 1, 2023, that includes the following:

- information on which CTCs were selected for the pilot program, how much grant funding each received, and what strategies were implemented;
- demographic data of students accessing mental health counseling and services;
- whether the mental health counseling and services provided met the demand of students in terms of type and availability;
- whether mental health needs are served by a community partnership or on-campus services;
- information and data on the effectiveness of each strategy used to increase student access to mental health counseling and services; and
- lessons learned and recommendations for improving student access to mental health counseling and services at the CTCs.

The pilot program expires July 1, 2025.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 2021.

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