

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2256

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to the children and youth behavioral health work group.

Brief Description: Addressing the children and youth behavioral health work group.

Sponsors: House Committee on Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning (originally sponsored by Representatives Callan, Eslick, Senn, Davis, Paul, Thai, Ormsby, Pollet and Macri).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning: 1/17/24, 1/19/24 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/12/24, 93-4.

Passed Senate: 2/27/24, 49-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Modifies membership and requirements for the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group (Work Group).
- Delays the deadline for the work group Strategic Plan Advisory Group to submit a draft strategic plan regarding behavioral health from October 1, 2024, to August 1, 2025.
- Extends the expiration of the Work Group from December 30, 2026, to December 30, 2029.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, YOUTH, & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Cortes, Vice Chair; Rule, Vice Chair;

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Callan, Dent, Goodman, Ortiz-Self and Taylor.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Walsh.

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group.

The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group (Work Group) was established to identify barriers to, and opportunities for, accessing behavioral health services for children and their families and advise the Legislature on statewide behavioral health services for those children and families. There are 38 members of the Work Group, including legislators, representatives from state agencies, providers, parent and child representatives, and advocates.

The cochairs of the Work Group are selected by the Work Group members and must include one legislative member and one executive branch member. At the direction of the cochairs of the Work Group, the Work Group may convene advisory groups to evaluate specific issues and report related findings and recommendations to the full Work Group. The Work Group is required to convene an advisory group for the purpose of developing a behavioral health strategic plan. This strategic plan advisory committee must complete the strategic plan by October 1, 2024.

The Work Group must submit annual recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature. The Work Group expires December 30, 2026.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The goals of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group (Work Group) are expanded to include strengthening and building a coordinated systemic approach to providing behavioral health care and supports that ensure that all children, youth, young adults, and their families have timely access to high quality, equitable, well-resourced behavioral health education, care, and supports across the continuum when and where they need it, including prenatal care.

The Work Group membership is modified to:

- allow the Governor to appoint additional representatives from state agencies;
- include three youth or young adult representatives who have experience with behavioral health issues as members;
- allow the cochairs of the Work Group to request that the Governor appoint additional members;
- allow the Governor to consult with the cochairs regarding discretionary additional

- membership appointments beyond what are required in statute;
- limit newly appointed work group member terms to three years and allow existing members to remain in their positions until January 1, 2027; and
- add a member representing the educational service districts.

Identification of Work Group cochairs is modified to specify the nonlegislative cochair must be the representative from the Health Care Authority (current law allows the nonlegislative cochair to be selected from among the executive branch members).

The requirements of the Work Group are expanded to include determining the strategies and resources needed to achieve parity of private health insurance coverage for behavioral health conditions with the coverage provided for other health conditions.

The School-based Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention Advisory Group is modified to:

- specify that it includes preschool through twelfth grade (instead of kindergarten through twelfth grade); and
- require that it consider the broader behavioral health issues impacting children, youth, and families, while focusing on the issues that are unique to children and families that interface with schools.

The Work Group cochairs must appoint a chair for the Strategic Plan Advisory Group.

The Strategic Plan Advisory Group Draft Strategic Plan is modified to remove an incremental action plan outlining the action steps needed to achieve the vision provided by the draft strategic plan, clear prioritization criteria, and a transparent evaluation plan. This strategic plan must be developed in coordination with the Joint Legislative and Executive Committee on Behavioral Health and the Department of Health and the Health Care Authority in relation to the implementation of the 988 Crisis Hotline. The deadline for the advisory group to submit this strategic plan is delayed from October 1, 2024, to August 1, 2025.

The expiration of the Work Group is delayed from December 30, 2026, to December 30, 2029.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The origin of this bill is to support the work to create a strategic plan for young people and their families that includes a full continuum of care. There needs to be resources for families at the earliest stages.

Last year, the Legislature created the Joint Legislative and Executive Committee on Behavioral Health that includes behavioral health issues for young people and adults. It is important that the work of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group collaborate with the Joint Legislative and Executive committee's work.

The parent and caregiver role is very important for young children. The changes the bill makes are reasonable. The coordination and timeline align with the other existing task forces and work. Access to behavioral health services is vital in preventing school suicide. Some educational counselors are not prepared to provide the emotional support that young people need and are more prepared to help with class changes and college preparation. The work that the Work Group is doing is very important.

There is so much work to do to improve behavioral health issues for young people and their families. The Work Group effectively elevates the voice of people with lived experience.

This work group has an outstanding record in working with families and advocates to improve behavioral health services.

Representatives of educational service districts should be represented on the Work Group.

Families can experience devastating journeys of fear when trying to navigate the behavioral health service system. This Work Group is relevant and impactful. This Work Group is providing valuable support for many families. Extending the Work Group will allow greater data collection and improvement to the behavioral health system.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Lisa Callan, prime sponsor; Kashika Arora, Seattle Children's Hospital; Kristin Wiggins, Perigee Fund; Thatcher Felt, Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; Hanna Baker, Student; Karen Kelly; Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children; Shawn O'Neill, Health Care Authority; and Jessica Vavrus, Association of Educational Service Districts.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.