

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## E2SSB 5582

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Reducing barriers and expanding educational opportunities to increase the supply of nurses in Washington.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Holy, Randall, Rivers, Robinson, Dozier, King, Conway, Shewmake, Padden, Lovick, Gildon, Muzzall, Lovelett, Mullet, Nobles, Saldaña, Valdez, Van De Wege, Wellman, Wilson, C. and Wilson, L.).

**Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development**  
**Senate Committee on Ways & Means**  
**House Committee on Postsecondary Education & Workforce**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** Workforce Demands. Registered nurses (RN), licensed practical nurses (LPN), and certified nursing assistants (CNA) continuously rank among the most in-demand careers in Washington State with exceptionally long vacancies. Over the last five years, the state has averaged 3200 qualified applicants to nursing programs turned away annually due to not enough capacity in RN programs. The community and technical colleges are graduating between 1600 and 1800 nursing students annually.

The Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (NCQAC) regulates the nursing profession in Washington and establishes, monitors, and enforces licensing, standards of practice, and discipline. NCQAC has responsibility for approving and regulating all nursing education programs in the state.

NCQAC is currently operating the following programs to address the nursing workforce demands:

- LPN apprenticeship program—in 2021, the Legislature provided a planning grant to NCQAC to fund a 3-year implementation of the LPN apprenticeship program; and
- Washington State Student Nurse Preceptor Grant Program—the grant program is currently funded at \$3 million annually and funds nurses who precept nursing

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students in healthcare settings including advanced registered nurse practitioner, RN, and LPN programs.

Skill Centers. Skill centers are regional career and technical education (CTE) instructional venues established and operated by a host school district to provide access to comprehensive, industry-defined CTE programs that prepare high school students for careers, employment, apprenticeships, and postsecondary education. There are 14 skill centers in Washington. In the 2019-20 school year, approximately 5600 full-time equivalent students were enrolled in skill centers.

**Summary:** Expanding Nursing Credential Opportunities. *State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.* Subject to amounts appropriated, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) is directed to develop a plan to train more nurses over the next four years. SBCTC must consult with health care employers, exclusive bargaining units, and local workforce boards in developing the plan. The plan must include CNAs, LPNs, and RNs. The plan must prioritize programs which create new capacity, expand training opportunities for rural and underserved students, demonstrate long-term sustainability, and expand partnerships between employers and exclusive bargaining units. A report with the plan is due by December 1, 2024.

SBCTC must select two community or technical colleges, one on either side of the Cascade crest, to develop an online LPN curriculum. The curriculum may include use of a mobile skills lab or other innovative approaches to serve rural students.

SBCTC must contract with a firm that has expertise in human resources consulting and health care to conduct a salary survey on nurse educator compensation. The study must benchmark the 50th and 75th percentiles of nurse educator compensation. A report on the outcomes of the salary survey is due to the Legislature by December 1, 2024.

*Licensed Practical Nurse Apprenticeship Pathway Program.* The Home Care Aid to LPN Apprenticeship Pathway Program is created with three pilot locations in geographically disparate sites. A report is due to the Legislature on barriers faced by current and prospective students, the status of the pilot and opportunities to scale-up by December 1, 2025.

*Marketing Program.* The Workforce Board is required to contract with marketing firms to advertise available nurse training opportunities and jobs in Washington.

Eliminate Bottlenecks in Nurse Training. *Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commissions.* NCQAC is permitted to grant approval to bachelors degrees in nursing programs where the nurse administrator holds a graduate degree with a major in nursing and sufficient experience.

NCQAC must count one hour of simulation lab experience in place of two hours of clinical

placement learning, up to a maximum of 50 percent of the required clinical hours for nurse licensure.

Subject to amounts appropriated, the Legislature intends to expand the Student Nurse Preceptor Grant Program. NCQAC must expand the program with a focus on serving acute shortage areas including rural and underserved communities and long-term care facilities. In addition, increased clinical opportunities must be achieved through reducing the required number of qualifying hours for grant eligibility from 100 to 80.

Grow K-12 Pathways into Healthcare Careers. *Career and Technical Education Grant Program.* Establishes a grant program for CTE health sciences to allow districts to create or expand health science program offerings.

*High School Student CNAs Pilot Program.* NCQAC, in collaboration with rural hospitals, CNA certified training programs, and the Department of Labor and Industries, must create at least two pilot projects for rural hospitals to help address workforce shortages and promote nursing careers in rural hospitals. The pilot project must have at least one participating rural hospital on the east and west side of the Cascade mountains.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	48	0
House	97	0

**Effective:** July 23, 2023