

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2467

*As Reported By House Committee on:
State Government*

Title: An act relating to removing the termination provisions for the regulation of counselors.

Brief Description: Repealing the termination provisions of the counselor registration statute.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Moyer, Brekke, Dellwo, Paris and Anderson.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, January 17, 1992, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
STATE GOVERNMENT**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 8 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Pruitt, Vice Chair; McLean, Ranking Minority Member; Bowman, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; R. Fisher; Moyer; O'Brien; and Sheldon.

Staff: Linda May (786-7135).

Background: Individuals in Washington who meet the statutory definition of a "counselor" must register with the state before engaging in the practice of counseling. This registration program began in 1987 and was originally administered by the Department of Licensing. In 1989, administrative responsibility was transferred to the Department of Health. The Secretary of the Department of Health determines what information an applicant must submit in order to be registered as a counselor, and counselors are subject to the Uniform Disciplinary Act. More than 12,000 counselors are registered under this program.

In addition to registration as counselors, individuals who meet certain educational, experience, and examination requirements may be certified as social workers, mental health counselors, or marriage and family therapists.

The program regulating the registration of counselors and the certification of social workers, mental health

counselors, and marriage and family therapists is scheduled to terminate on June 30, 1994.

Summary of Bill: The termination date on the program regulating counselors, social workers, mental health counselors, and marriage and family therapists is removed.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The program was developed initially as a way to protect the public from unethical counselors. Prior to the program, there were no avenues for a consumer complaint other than the courts. Even if a consumer won a court challenge, there were no provisions to keep the guilty practitioner from continuing to practice. In addition to consumer protection, the program also clearly specifies educational and training requirements for certification, which helps to end consumer confusion about what a particular title means. The consumer complaint process is working. The existing program is not perfect, but it is effective and is doing what it is supposed to do. Registration of counselors is a good first step.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: David E. Dickman, National Association of Social Workers; Gary L. Bowlin, Washington Mental Health Counselors Association; Bonita Hickman, Washington Association for Marriage and Family Therapy; and Dawn Larsen, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs (all in favor).