

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## ESSB 6554

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As Passed Senate, February 17, 2004

**Title:** An act relating to eliminating credentialing barriers for health professions.

**Brief Description:** Eliminating credentialing barriers for health professions.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Franklin, Parlette, Keiser, Winsley and Thibaudeau; by request of Department of Health).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 2/3/04, 2/4/04 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 2/17/04, 47-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6554 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Deccio, Chair; Winsley, Vice Chair; Brandland, Franklin, Keiser, Parlette and Thibaudeau.

**Staff:** Tanya Karwaki (786-7447)

**Background:** In 2002, the Health Care Personnel Shortage Task Force examined the extent of Washington's health care personnel shortage and developed recommendations for addressing the shortage of health care workers. The task force's final report identified shortages of health care personnel in numerous fields, including nurses, medical aides, dental hygienists, billers and coders, laboratory personnel, pharmacists, physicians, and radiology technologists. Several of these health care providers are regulated by the Department of Health.

The Department of Health and the various health profession boards and commissions issue credentials to 57 types of health care providers in this state. The general qualifications that health care providers must meet are established in statute. The Department and the boards and commissions are responsible for developing more specific minimum standards to determine entrance into a profession based upon these statutory requirements.

**Summary of Bill:** Changes are made to the licensing requirements for acupuncturists, dental hygienists, dispensing opticians, nurses, psychologists, and respiratory care practitioners.

The clinical training provisions requiring that applicants for an acupuncture license demonstrate the completion of a combination of quarter credits, patient contacts, and treatments, is eliminated and replaced with a flat 500 hours of approved clinical training.

An applicant for a dental hygienist license may obtain a temporary license. An initial limited license is valid for 18 months and renewable upon demonstration of successful passage of the examination for administering local anesthetic and nitrous oxide/oxygen analgesia. A person

practicing with a renewed limited license may not place restorations, carve, contour, or adjust contacts and occlusion of the restoration. Dental hygiene students may practice dental hygiene when under the direction and supervision of instructors who are licensed dentists or dental hygienists.

Citizenship requirements for dispensing optician license applicants are eliminated.

The requirement that applicants for a nursing license provide evidence of a diploma from a school of nursing is changed to a transcript demonstrating an applicant's graduation and successful completion of a nursing program. Active licensed practical nurses who complete an approved nontraditional registered nurse program can meet their supervised clinical experience requirement by acquiring the experience: (1) under the supervision of a registered nurse preceptor with an unrestricted license, and at least two years of experience in the same type of practice setting as where the preceptorship will occur; and (2) within six months of completing the nontraditional program.

An applicant for a license to practice psychology must pass an exam; however, the requirement that there be both a written and oral exam is eliminated. The right to discuss exam performance with the Board of Psychology is eliminated. The requirement that one of the two years of supervised experience required for a license be obtained after receiving the doctoral degree is removed. A temporary practice permit may be granted to an applicant who is a member of a professional organization and holds a certificate that the Board of Psychology finds to meet the profession's standards. A license may be granted without oral examination if the applicant is a member of a professional organization and holds a certificate that the Board of Psychology finds meets the profession's standards.

An applicant for the respiratory care licensure examination must have completed an accredited respiratory program. The educational criteria required for licensure may be satisfied by meeting the educational criteria established by the National Board for Respiratory Care to sit for the National Board for Respiratory Care's advanced practitioners' exams. Alternatively, an applicant may satisfy the educational criteria if he or she has been credentialed as a registered respiratory therapist by the national board.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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

**Testimony For:** Shortages in health care professions are well known and Washington should not have unnecessary barriers for providers coming in from other states. Washington has an expanded dental hygienist practice and some from other states do not want to do restorative work. Dental hygienists from other states should not have to take a class for skills they are not going to use.

**Testified Other:** Licensed practical nurses in nontraditional programs should complete their coursework before beginning their clinical experience because the supervising registered nurse cannot be expected to be familiar with a students education and skill level.

**Testimony Against:** The dental hygienist language does not apply only to out of state hygienists, it also applies to those that are educated in Washington. The language is overly broad. It is important not to limit restorative work.

**Testified:** Melissa Johnson, Washington State Dental Hygienists Association (con); Sharon Ness, UFCW (concerns); Tamara Warnke, WSNA (concerns); Sue Shoblorn, Department of Health (pro); Linda Hull, Washington State Dental Association (pro); Ann Wiltshire, Dental Hygienist.

**House Amendment(s):** It is declared that the provisions related to respiratory therapists take effect immediately.