

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1670

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, March 28, 2007

Title: An act relating to the role of school counselors in public schools.

Brief Description: Articulating the purpose and role of school counselors.

Sponsors: Representatives Quall and Santos.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/12/07, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/26/07, 3/28/07 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Tom, Vice Chair; Clements, Eide, Hewitt, Hobbs, Oemig, Rasmussen, Weinstein and Zarelli.

Staff: Eric Bratton (786-7438)

Background: Under state law, the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) is authorized to set standards for approval of preparation and certification programs for Educational Staff Associates (ESAs). Through administrative rules, the PESB defines seven types of ESA certification: school counselor, school speech pathologist/audiologist, school nurse, school occupational therapist, school physical therapist, school psychologist, and school social worker. There are different standards for each type of program and certification. Because the preparation programs are competency-based, there is extensive information in the administrative rules about standards for and the role of school counselors. However, there is no definition of school counselor, and only one reference to school counselors, in the state education code.

Summary of Bill: A school counselor is a professional educator with a valid counselor certification issued by the PESB. The purpose and role of a school counselor is to plan, organize, and deliver a comprehensive school guidance and counseling program that personalizes education; supports, promotes, and enhances development of all students; and is based on the National Standards for School Counseling Programs of the American School Counselor Association.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: School counselors play a very significant role in schools. They provide a safe haven to many students. This bill puts the role of school counselors into statute. Teachers help students with academics and counselors help students with all of the other social and emotional issues that students face. High school counselors play a vital and multifaceted role for the high school and all of its students. Students need a qualified and trained counselor to help them not only academically, but also emotionally. Having a counselor with the background to help students with all aspects of school is very important. We are hopeful that the Legislature will recognize that school counselors are professionals who are properly trained, certified, and suited to the academic, personal, social, and career development needs of our students. This bill establishes the purpose and role of school counselors for the first time in statute and defines who we are. I am often frustrated when asked "What does a school counselor do?" This House bill makes it clear that we are educational educators. I support this bill because it recognizes that certificated counselors must play a vital role in maximizing student achievement. Using the National Standards for School Counseling Programs will help bring consistency to the profession.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Quall, prime sponsor; Brennan O'Keefe, Hannah Peckler, Aaron Lampkin, Matt Walsh, students at Capital High School in Olympia; Stacey Adams, Tim Madden, Shelton School District; Matt Carlson, Jenny Morgan, Marian Illingworth, Kim Reykdal, Bernie Lenoue, Washington School Counselor Association; Dan Windisch, Washington Counseling Association; Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Mike Hubert, Bremerton School District.

Signed in, Unable to Testify & Submitted Written Testimony: PRO: Nancy James, Washington School Counselor Association.