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**SENATE BILL 5053**

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**State of Washington 66th Legislature 2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senators O'Ban, Sheldon, Becker, Brown, Wilson, L., Zeiger, Short, Takko, and Wagoner

AN ACT Relating to increasing behavioral health workforce participation by addressing certification and licensure requirements; amending RCW 18.205.100 and 18.19.210; and creating a new section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 18.205.100 and 2000 c 171 s 42 are each amended to read as follows:

The secretary may establish by rule the standards and procedures for approval of educational programs and alternative training. The requirements for approved supervision towards certification must be the same for all applicants in the regular or alternative training pathways. The requirements for approved supervision towards certification must allow approved supervision to be provided by a licensed social worker or licensed mental health practitioner who has at least one year of experience in the treatment of substance use disorders or who has completed the alternative training requirements. The secretary may utilize or contract with individuals or organizations having expertise in the profession or in education to assist in the evaluations. The secretary shall establish by rule the standards and procedures for revocation of approval of educational programs. The standards and procedures set shall apply equally to educational programs and training in the United States and in foreign jurisdictions. The secretary may establish a fee for educational program evaluations.

**Sec.**  RCW 18.19.210 and 2013 c 338 s 6 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) An applicant for registration as an agency affiliated counselor who applies to the department within seven days of employment by an agency may work as an agency affiliated counselor ((~~for up to sixty days~~)) while the application is processed. The applicant must ((~~stop working on the sixtieth day of employment if the registration has not been granted for any reason~~)) provide required documentation within reasonable time limits established by the department, and if the applicant does not do so, the applicant must stop working.

(b) The applicant may not provide unsupervised counseling prior to completion of a criminal background check performed by either the employer or the secretary. For purposes of this subsection, "unsupervised" means the supervisor is not physically present at the location where the counseling occurs.

(2) Agency affiliated counselors shall notify the department if they are either no longer employed by the agency identified on their application or are now employed with another agency, or both. Agency affiliated counselors may not engage in the practice of counseling unless they are currently affiliated with an agency.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The department of health shall conduct a sunrise review under chapter 18.120 RCW to evaluate the need for creation of a bachelor's level behavioral health professional credential which includes competencies related to the treatment of both substance use and mental health disorders appropriate to the bachelor's level of education, allows for reimbursement of services in all appropriate settings where persons with behavioral health disorders are treated, and is designed to facilitate work in conjunction with master's level clinicians in a fashion which enables all professionals to work at the top of their scope of license.

**--- END ---**