

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1265

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to increasing student access to school counselors.

Brief Description: Increasing student access to school counselors.

Sponsors: Representatives Ortiz-Self, Harris, Santos, Volz, Senn, Kilduff, Orwall, Riccelli, Frame, Dolan, Valdez, Steele, Lovick, Peterson, Reeves, Tarleton, Fitzgibbon, Walen, Sells, Doglio, Bergquist, Stanford, Appleton, Slatter, Thai, Wylie, Jinkins, Macri, Pollet, Goodman and Leavitt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/28/19, 1/31/19 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Phases in increased allocations for guidance counselors and a corresponding requirement that most guidance counselors spend at least 80 percent of their time providing direct services to students by September 1, 2022.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Paul, Vice Chair; Steele, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Volz, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Callan, Corry, Harris, Kilduff, Kraft, Ortiz-Self, Rude, Stonier, Thai, Valdez and Ybarra.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

School Counselors.

The purpose and role of the school counselor is to plan, organize, and deliver a comprehensive school guidance and counseling program that personalizes education and

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supports, promotes, and enhances the academic, personal, social, and career development of all students, based on the national standards for school counseling programs of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). The ASCA national model recommends a student-to-school counselor ratio of 250:1, and that 80 percent or more of a school counselor's time be spent providing direct and indirect services to students.

Guidance Counselor Allocations.

The prototypical school funding model allocates general apportionment funding to school districts based on assumed levels of staff and other resources necessary to support "prototypical" elementary, middle, and high schools. These prototypical schools are assumed to have the following full-time student enrollments: 400 students for elementary school; 432 students for middle school; and 600 students for high school. School districts have discretion over how the allocations received under this model are spent, subject to some limits.

Regarding the allocation for "guidance counselors, a function that includes parent outreach and graduation," the following staff units are provided:

- 0.493 for a prototypical elementary school;
 - 1.216 for a prototypical middle school; and
 - 2.539 for a prototypical high school.
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Summary of Substitute Bill:

Guidance Counselor Allocations.

Increased allocations for guidance counselors under the prototypical school funding model are phased in over three school years to:

- 0.800 for a prototypical elementary school; and
- 1.728 for a prototypical middle school.

Phase in for the allocations described above is according to the following schedule:

- for the 2019-20 school year, schools identified as most in need of support using the state accountability framework;
- for the 2020-21 and 2021-22 school years, schools identified as most in need of support using the state accountability framework and Title I schools not identified as most in need of support; and
- beginning in the 2022-23 school year, all schools.

During the phase in, school districts must distribute the additional guidance counselor allocations to the schools that generated them. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) must develop rules to implement these requirements.

Direct Student Services.

Except in school districts with student populations of fewer than 250 students, once a school receives the new guidance counselor allocations, its school counselors must spend at least 80 percent of their time providing direct services to students. The OSPI must adopt a rule that defines "direct services," in a manner that is consistent with the ASCA national model.

"Direct services" may not include the coordination of standardized testing.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill exempts school districts with student populations of fewer than 250 students from the requirement that guidance counselors spend at least 80 percent of their time providing direct services to students.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 31, 2019.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: This bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for sections 2 and 4, relating to guidance counselor allocations and direct services requirements applicable to most schools, which take effect September 1, 2022.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is part of a larger focus on school safety. When looking at school safety, school counselors are important to the foundation. A full-time school counselor has a positive effect on students, particularly students from low-income families, including increasing graduation rates and reducing disciplinary actions. School counselors are in classrooms, working with students one-on-one or in small groups, providing professional development to school staff, and linking students' families with various resources. They are the first responders when there is a report of abuse, someone is homeless, or someone is a bully. School counselors need time to do all of these activities.

School counselors face barriers to providing equitable access to services for students, including high counselor-to-student ratios and inappropriate school counselor duties. The state should be at a school-counselor-to-student ratio of 1:250. State appropriations currently fund school counselors at two to four times this ratio. This bill funds school counselors at a ratio of 1:500 in elementary schools and 1:250 in middle schools. The ASCA recommends that school counselors spend 80 percent of their time working directly and indirectly with students to meet their academic, career, and social-emotional needs. School counselors are frequently taken away from these duties to substitute for other teachers, supervise lunchrooms, and coordinate standardized assessments.

Students have many mental health needs. There should be comprehensive mental health services in schools, provided by school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses. These staff have various expertise that they bring to the team. It would also be helpful to increase the numbers of these other staff members in schools.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Ortiz-Self, prime sponsor; Nita Hill, Marisa Castello, and Jenny Morgan, Washington School Counselors Association; Elizabeth Nelson,

Washington Association of School Social Workers; and Katie Kehoe, Franklin School District.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: Lucinda Young, Washington Education Association; Nancy Chamberlain, Washington State Parent Teacher Association; Bob Cooper, National Association of Social Workers - Washington Chapter; Katherine Mahoney, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Jessica Vavrus, Washington State School Directors' Association; Kaaren Heikes, Washington State Board of Education; and Dave Powell, Stand for Children.