

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5633

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As of February 23, 2019

**Title:** An act relating to supporting and expanding behavioral health workforce pathway programs.

**Brief Description:** Supporting and expanding behavioral health workforce pathway programs.

**Sponsors:** Senators Brown, Walsh, Becker, Hasegawa, Zeiger, Keiser and O'Ban.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Behavioral Health Subcommittee to Health & Long Term Care: 2/21/19, 2/22/19 [DP-WM].

**Ways & Means:** 2/26/19.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Appropriates \$1.1 million from the general fund to the Department of Health for the benefit of eastern and western Washington area health education centers.
- Requires appropriated funds to be spent for supporting and expanding behavioral health workforce academic and career pathway programs.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE TO HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Dhingra, Chair; Wagoner, Ranking Member; Darneille and Frockt.

**Staff:** Kevin Black (786-7747)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Travis Sugarman (786-7446)

**Background:** An Area Health Education Center (AHEC) is a federally-funded entity that is created to develop and implement strategies to recruit individuals from underrepresented minority populations or from disadvantaged or rural background into health professions, and

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support such individuals in attaining careers. Washington State is home to two AHECs that receive annual funding from the University of Washington and Department of Health (DOH). These organizations target students in high school and college with programs designed to inspire students and prepare them to enter training to participate in health professions. Mental Health First Aid is offered to increase awareness of behavioral health among health professionals, educators, and community members, and continuing education and mentorship is offered to health professionals.

Whatcom Community College is the site of the AHEC for western Washington. Eastern Washington University is the home of the eastern Washington AHEC.

**Summary of Bill:** DOH must provide appropriated funds to eastern and western Washington AHECs for the purpose of supporting and expanding current behavioral health workforce academic and career pathway programs.

**Appropriation:** The bill contains an appropriation totaling \$1,100,000 from the general fund.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Behavioral Health Subcommittee to Health & Long Term Care):** PRO: There is a need to expand pathways for mental health and behavioral health. We had another youth suicide in my district yesterday morning. We need individuals who are trained and ready to go into our communities and schools. There is a general shortage of behavioral health professionals around the country. Demand for behavioral health care is rising rapidly. The disease burden of mental health and substance use disorders was higher than for any other health condition in 2015. The shortage of psychiatrists is an escalating crisis. This bill will help. Most students begin their practice in debt. We need to recruit people into this field.

**Persons Testifying (Behavioral Health Subcommittee to Health & Long Term Care):** PRO: Senator Sharon Brown, Prime Sponsor; Seth Dawson, Washington State Psychiatric Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Behavioral Health Subcommittee to Health & Long Term Care):** No one.