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**HOUSE BILL 1400**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Vick, Kirby, and Dufault

AN ACT Relating to alternative licensing standards of professional licenses; adding a new section to chapter 43.24 RCW; adding a new chapter to Title 18 RCW; creating a new section; and providing an effective date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that there are many ways to gain demonstrated competency of skills in a profession. Furthermore, conditions such as educational requirements, course fees, and training hours, which an individual must fulfill before receiving a professional license to practice in a profession, create unnecessary barriers to an individual's right to employment if the individual can demonstrate full competency of the skills required of that profession.

(2) The legislature also finds that such redundant requirements are likely to discriminate against people of color, low-income individuals, and trained or untrained immigrant populations, who may possess the ability to excel in a profession but lack the ability to readily fulfill the professional licensing requirements to practice.

(3) It is therefore the intent of the legislature to authorize the Washington state department of licensing, after consulting with relevant trade groups, to develop a competency-based assessment which allows individuals to demonstrate proficiency of the knowledge and skills otherwise required by a professional licensing examination.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 43.24 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department of licensing may issue a professional license, without regard to other requirements, to an applicant if the applicant meets all competency-based licensing requirements for a specific professional license issued by the department.

(2) For the purposes of this section:

(a)(i) "Competency-based licensing requirement" means a practical assessment of knowledge and skills that clearly demonstrate a person is prepared to engage in a profession regulated by the department, and which the director of the department of licensing determines is at least as effective as examination-based professional licensing requirements at demonstrating proficiency and protecting the health and safety of the public.

(ii) "Competency-based licensing requirement" may include, but is not limited to, any combination of training, experience, testing, or observation.

(b) "Professional license" means a license, certificate, registration, permit, or other form of authorization required by law or a state agency rule that must be obtained by an individual to engage in a profession which is regulated by the department of licensing.

(3) This section does not apply when there is a reciprocity licensing agreement with a national organization in place to facilitate reciprocal professional licensing of an individual licensed in another state.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new chapter is added to Title 18 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The department of licensing may issue a professional license, without regard to other requirements, to an applicant if the applicant meets all competency-based licensing requirements for a specific professional license issued by the department.

(2) For the purposes of this section:

(a)(i) "Competency-based licensing requirement" means a practical assessment of knowledge and skills that clearly demonstrate a person is prepared to engage in a profession regulated by the department, and which the director of the department of licensing determines is at least as effective as examination-based professional licensing requirements at demonstrating proficiency and protecting the health and safety of the public.

(ii) "Competency-based licensing requirement" may include, but is not limited to, any combination of training, experience, testing, or observation.

(b) "Professional license" means a license, certificate, registration, permit, or other form of authorization required by law or a state agency rule that must be obtained by an individual to engage in a profession which is regulated by the department of licensing.

(3) This section does not apply when there is a reciprocity licensing agreement with a national organization in place to facilitate reciprocal professional licensing of an individual licensed in another state.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  This act takes effect January 1, 2022.

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