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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1872**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** House College & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Representatives Senn, Slatter, Berry, Leavitt, Santos, Sells, Simmons, Bronoske, Shewmake, Taylor, Chopp, Ramel, Callan, Riccelli, Lekanoff, Bateman, Macri, Harris-Talley, Valdez, Duerr, and Pollet)

AN ACT Relating to establishing the care worker center to promote caregiving professions; adding a new section to chapter 28C.18 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature recognizes that care workers provide support to others who are not able to fully care for themselves or live independently without support, fulfilling a critical and essential industry. Care workers are paid to support individuals in their homes, in the community, in the workplace, and in classroom settings. By providing support to an individual or a small group in need of care, these care workers improve the lives of the recipients by attending to their specific needs, assisting them with their daily tasks, and when possible, helping them to transition to higher levels of independence and community engagement. Care workers work with children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and others with significant barriers. The legislature identifies the importance of having a diverse care worker workforce that reflects the diversity of the recipients receiving care as this positively impacts patient care, educational outcomes, and service for historically underrepresented and marginalized groups.

(2) The legislature also recognizes that the need for paid care workers is expected to grow over the next 20 years, only adding to the existing and looming crisis of workforce shortages. These jobs cannot be internationally outsourced and there will always be a need for care workers. Addressing language and cultural barriers in these professions is a place where the state can make headway in communication with, recruiting from, and meeting the unique needs of diverse communities' cultures and languages.

(3) The legislature also recognizes that care workers are among some of the lowest paid professions in the labor market. Currently, these positions offer little room for economic advancement and rarely offer employee benefits. Additionally, care worker schedules can be unpredictable, making it difficult to supplement income with other jobs or to go to school to prepare for higher paid employment opportunities. Erratic schedules and low incomes can also burden families and cause chaos to home and family life. This historically low pay and limited access to benefits discourages many people from entering and remaining in the field, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, improvements in wages, health care benefits, retirement, paid time off, workers compensation, union representation, and career progression and advancement opportunities are essential to attracting and retaining care workers to the field.

(4) It is the legislature's intent to support the career, economic, and professional success of care workers in order to improve health, safety, and social outcomes of the individuals receiving care as well as the care workers. These care workers are essential to the state's economy and the population's well-being. Therefore, the legislature is establishing the care worker center.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28C.18 RCW to read as follows:

(1) The board shall establish the care worker center as a central access point of knowledge, research, resources, and best practices for care workers to be used by care workers, employers, career counselors, education and training providers, policymakers, and others.

(2) The care worker center shall initially focus on three caregiving professions: Child care and early learning, long-term care, and caregivers working with people with disabilities including personal care attendants and direct service professionals. Within the first two years of establishment, the board shall set up the care worker center with staff, conduct an introductory marketing campaign, and work with relevant state, private, labor, trade associations, and community stakeholders involved with child care and early learning or long-term care for people with disabilities or older adults to fulfill the duties of the care worker center.

(3) As administrators of the care worker center, the board, in consultation with care worker stakeholders and agencies holding administrative authority over the various elements of workforce education and training, financial aid, workforce development, and occupational licensing and regulation, shall have the following duties for the care worker center:

(a) Review labor force data on wages, benefits, health and safety, educational output, staffing needs, and current and expected workforce shortages for the various care worker sectors;

(b) Perform research and analysis on trends within Washington state to provide an accurate depiction of the caregiving workforce including, but not limited to, numbers and demographics of care workers in each subfield, care workers' professional trajectories, occupational health and safety of care workers, care worker longevity on the job, the outcomes and impacts that care worker interventions have on recipients of care, income and benefit trends among care workers, and impacts of care worker shortages on communities, families, and workplaces;

(c) Conduct surveys to better understand the reasons why care workers remain in the occupation, why care workers leave the occupation, and recommendations for increasing care worker retention;

(d) Maintain a searchable repository of original and existing research; track policy recommendations from relevant commissions, state agencies, initiatives, and others engaged in research and trend analysis of caregiving; and periodically disseminate summaries of the latest findings and recommendations;

(e) Create and launch a marketing campaign to promote and help recruit people to the caregiving field, with portable document format files, digital resources, and printer-friendly resources that can be posted and used by worksource centers, career navigators, education and career counselors, employment coaches, employers, community service organizations, libraries, tribal schools, community centers, and other places potential and current workers may frequent. The content must be made available in the top five most commonly spoken languages in Washington state;

(f) Establish and provide online resources that visualize the path of career ladders and necessary education or training, incorporating Washington career bridge as appropriate; discuss employer types and relevant union information; link to job search assistance; and highlight free and low-cost services, benefits, and other resources to support the well-being of care workers and their families; and

(g) Identify similarities and differences across care worker occupations, including commonalities across licensing requirements, to facilitate worker mobility within and between care worker professions;

(h) Map care worker skill sets, competencies, abilities, and experiences to job progression opportunities and identify areas where additional occupational licensing categories or education and training credentials are needed in order to attain new opportunities, including where training can be offered online, be made more accessible, and where experience may count as equivalent to education;

(i) Administer a transformation grant pilot program to promote new care practice methods and ideas to transform the care worker sector, develop metrics and reporting mechanisms to collect data and track progress and outcomes of the transformation grants, and disseminate the results and best practices to facilitate care worker transformation; and

(j) Develop policy recommendations on the following:

(i) Maintaining, supporting, and increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the care worker fields, which may include additional language supports for English language learners; evidence-based practices in cultural competency in education and support materials; race, ethnicity, and other data that may need to be collected; and exploring opportunities for career progression in care worker professions;

(ii) Increasing recruitment and retention, which may include additional methods and diverse pathways to recruit employees and recommendations for workplace culture and safety, compensation, and benefits; and

(iii) Increasing flexibility and affordability of education and training, experience and educational equivalencies, licensing, and credentialing for care workers.

(4) The board shall report to the appropriate committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036 by September 1st of the first year of each biennium, beginning with September 1, 2022, on the following:

(a) The progress of meeting the goals of the care worker center;

(b) The results of the transformation grant pilot program; and

(c) Policy and practice recommendations based on the research and data collected throughout the phases.

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