

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## E2SHB 1504

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As of March 16, 2021

**Title:** An act relating to modifying the workforce education investment act to invest in new and existing behavioral health workforce programs.

**Brief Description:** Modifying the workforce education investment act.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Chopp, Simmons, Berry, Davis, Valdez, Wylie, Johnson, J., Ryu, Tharinger, Taylor, Goodman, Bergquist, Ramel, Peterson, Senn, Dolan, Ormsby, Duerr, Macri, Kloba, Callan, Morgan, Stonier, Pollet, Riccelli and Thai).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/3/21, 62-34.

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education & Workforce Development: 3/16/21.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that a portion of nonfederal funds in the Health Professional Loan Repayment Program be prioritized for demographically underrepresented students.
- Establishes a behavioral health workforce pilot program and provides training support grants to community mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers.
- Increases the cap on state match dollars for the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship Advanced Degree Pathways Account.
- Adds workforce development as an allowable use of the Workforce Education Investment Account.

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Staff:** Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

**Background:** Washington Health Corps. The Washington Health Corps consists of the Health Professional Loan Repayment and the Behavioral Health Loan Repayment programs. The programs provide licensed professionals with student loan repayment if the professional agrees to serve in an underserved area with a identified shortage. The programs provide up to \$75,000 in loan repayment for a minimum three-year service obligation.

Community Behavioral Health. The Health Care Authority (HCA) is the state behavioral health authority and manages the community behavioral health system for clients enrolled in the Medicaid program, called Apple Health in Washington. Community mental health agencies often serve as training sites for professionals seeking supervision hours to meet licensure requirements. A credentialed individual seeking one or more of the common behavioral health related licenses in Washington must complete anywhere from 1500 to 4000 hours of supervised practice. These individuals must also find an appropriately credentialed and licensed professional who is willing to act as their supervisor over this period of time.

Washington State Opportunity Scholarship. The Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS) is a public-private match program in which the state matches any private donations to fund scholarships in high-demand fields. The WSOS has three scholarship programs: Career and Technical Education, Baccalaureate, and Graduate. The Graduate Scholarship Program will begin accepting applications for the 2021-22 academic year for students pursuing a Doctor of Nursing Practice or a Master of Science in Nursing degree.

Workforce Education Investment Account. The Workforce Education Investment Account (WEIA) was created by the Legislature in 2019. All revenues from the Workforce Education Investment surcharges are to be deposited in the WEIA. The account may be used only for higher education programs, higher education operations, higher education compensation, and state-funded student aid programs. Expenditures from the WEIA must be used to supplement, not supplant, other federal, state, and local funding for higher education.

**Summary of Bill:** Health Professional Loan Repayment and Scholarship Program. The Office of Financial Assistance and the Department of Health are required to prioritize a portion of nonfederal funding in the Health Professional Loan Repayment program for applications that reflect demographically underrepresented students.

Behavioral Health Workforce Pilot Program and Training Support Grants. Subject to amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the HCA must establish a behavioral health workforce pilot program and training support grants for community mental health providers. The services must be implemented in partnership with and through the regional accountable communities of health or the University of Washington Behavioral Health

Institute.

The intent of the pilot program is to provide incentive pay for individuals serving as clinical supervisors within community behavioral health agencies. The HCA must ensure the pilot program covers three sites serving primarily Medicaid clients in both eastern and western Washington. Of those three sites, one must specialize in the delivery of behavioral health services for Medicaid enrolled children and one must offer substance use disorder treatment services. The HCA must report to the Legislature and the Office of Financial Management by September 30, 2023, on the pilot program's outcomes.

HCA must establish a grant program for mental health and substance use disorder providers that provides flexible funding for training and mentoring clinicians who serve children and youth. The HCA must consult with stakeholders, including behavioral health experts in services for children, youth, providers, and consumers, to develop guidelines for how the funding could be used. These uses must focus on evidence-based and promising practices, continuing education requirements, and quality monitoring infrastructure.

Washington State Opportunity Scholarship. The cap limiting state match dollars for the WSOS Advanced Degrees Pathways Account is increased from \$1 million to \$5 million.

Workforce Education Investment Account. Workforce development is added as an allowable use for the WEIA.

**Appropriation:** The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**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:** PRO: We are seeing an urgent need all across the state of Washington for those that are suffering from behavioral health illnesses. Our neighbors need our help and compassionate care. To provide this care, we need a lot more well trained workers. We must encourage and harness dollars from private entities to match the states commitment to addressing this problem. To improve our chances of success we must build on work that we are already doing including the workforce education investment act. Our under-served communities will continue to be undeserved until they are reflected in our behavioral health workforce and leadership. Last years the students at Western Washington University requested black counselors to reflect the needs of the student body. That person has not been hired because there are no black mental health professionals in the greater Bellingham area. The reality is that there are not qualified behavioral health workers of color that are able to take these positions. This bill will do a lot to recruit the

workforce that we need in ways that are sensitive to the communities they serve. Development of the behavioral health workforce has been a top concern for our communities as we look to provide mental health parity. Loan repayment assistance is a critical tool that makes it financially possible to work in our communities. We anticipate that the pilot program will be very successful. We have senior supervisors that are supporting trainees but it is a financial stretch for clinics that are providing that service because those senior clinicians are not seeing patients.

CON: In 2019, the workforce education and investment act was passed. It raised taxes and invested in higher education. It also created the oversight board. Their duties and responsibilities are to determine what degrees and programs are eligible. The concepts in this bill did not make it before that board. I heard about the agreement that was struck between businesses being taxed and legislators. And it was put into statute. It does not seem like we are following that statute to use the board to help make these decisions. We originally were concerned about the taxes. But it is pretty difficult if we decide not to follow the process set forth in the statute. It would make sense that new programs would go through that oversight board.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Frank Chopp, Prime Sponsor; Jude Ahmed, student, Washington Student Association; Kate Tudor, Washington Association for Community Health.

CON: Dave Mastin, Association of Washington Business.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.