

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1021

As Reported by House Committee On:
Postsecondary Education & Workforce

Title: An act relating to aligning social worker licensing requirements with national standards and requirements for other mental health professionals.

Brief Description: Aligning social worker licensing requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Thai, Orwall, Leavitt, Ryu, Simmons, Reed, Lekanoff, Callan, Macri, Reeves, Wylie, Kloba and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 1/13/23, 1/20/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Changes the supervised experience requirements for licensed advanced social workers and licensed independent clinical social workers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 14 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Waters, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Hansen, Jacobsen, Klicker, Leavitt, McEntire, Pollet, Schmidt and Timmons.

Staff: Elizabeth Allison (786-7129).

Background:

The state licenses two types of social workers: advanced social workers and independent clinical social workers. To become licensed as either type of social worker, an applicant

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must have: (1) graduated from an approved master's or doctorate level social work educational program; (2) passed an approved examination; and (3) completed a supervised experience requirement.

Advanced Social Workers.

The supervised experience requirement for a licensed advanced social worker consists of a minimum of 3,200 hours with supervision by an approved supervisor. Of those supervised hours, 800 must be in direct client contact, and at least 90 hours must include direct supervision by a licensed social worker or other equally qualified mental health professional. Of those directly supervised hours:

- at least 50 hours must include supervision by a licensed social worker; the other 40 hours may be supervised by an equally qualified mental health practitioner; and
- at least 40 hours must be one-to-one supervision; 50 hours may be in one-to-one or group supervision.

Independent Clinical Social Workers.

The supervised experience requirement for a licensed independent clinical social worker consists of a minimum of 4,000 hours of experience over a period of at least three years, with supervision by an approved supervisor. Of those supervised hours:

- at least 1,000 hours must be in direct client contact; and
- hours of direct supervision must include:
 - at least 130 hours by a licensed mental health practitioner;
 - at least 70 hours of supervision with a licensed independent clinical social worker; the other 60 hours may be supervised by an equally qualified mental health practitioner; and
 - at least 60 hours must be in one-to-one supervision; 70 hours may be in one-to-one or group supervision.

Summary of Bill:

The supervised experience requirements for licensed advanced social workers and licensed independent clinical social workers are changed.

Advanced Social Workers.

The supervised experience requirement is changed from a minimum of 3,200 hours to a minimum of 3,000 hours. The requirement that, of the 90 hours of direct supervision, at least 50 must include supervision by a licensed social worker and the other 40 may be supervised by an equally qualified mental health practitioner is removed.

Licensed Clinical Social Workers.

The supervised experience requirement is changed from a minimum of 4,000 hours over a period of at least three years to 3,000 hours over a period of at least two years. The hours of direct supervision are reduced from 130 hours to 100 hours.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Social workers perform critical tasks in our society. We've certainly seen recently that social workers step up and step out in providing so many needed services across sectors in our society. Social workers go further to acquire their knowledge because their job is critically required. This bill aligns the requirements in Washington with the rest of the states so that people who already have licenses to practice elsewhere can transition to working in Washington more smoothly. The bill will also implement recommendations that have been sent to the Legislature from the Workforce Education and Training Board and others. It also aligns social worker requirements with other licensed professionals under the same statute. Mental health counselors and marriage and family counselors require 3,000 hours, but for some reason social workers require 4,000. Making these changes sets Washington up for the coming social worker interstate compact. Cutting the hours as the bill requires will help get more licensed clinicians in the field, and we need as many as we can get.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) If social worker licensing requirements are made easier, then social workers should be made safer. There are no precautions in place for safety and social workers do not receive de-escalation training. Without safety training the bill would be sending more underqualified workers into the field. These changes would help mitigate the burden on the associate level for social workers and provide alignment with other professions. Most social workers are working 40 hours a week while they are earning hours, earning easily half of what they could make as a fully licensed social worker, which leads to burnout. As an anti-racist society, this bill provides greater opportunity for communities of color to produce social workers to help their own communities.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative My-Linh Thai, prime sponsor; Lindsey Arrasmith, Washington State Society for Clinical Social Work; and Bob Cooper, National Association of Social Workers Washington Chapter.

(Other) Heidi Worlton.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.