

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1234

As Passed House:

February 6, 2025

Title: An act relating to the mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers advisory committee.

Brief Description: Concerning the mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers advisory committee.

Sponsors: Representatives Simmons and Rule.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 1/22/25, 1/24/25 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/6/25, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows the one member of the Mental Health Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Social Workers Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) who must be an advanced social worker, to be either an advanced social worker or an independent clinical social worker.
- Specifies that the prohibition against members of the Advisory Committee holding an office in a relevant professional association applies specifically to holding a governing office or board position.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Bronoske, Chair; Lekanoff, Vice Chair; Schmick, Ranking Minority Member; Caldier, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Marshall, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Davis, Engell, Low,

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.

Macri, Manjarrez, Obras, Parshley, Shavers, Simmons, Stonier, Stuebe, Thai and Tharinger.

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

The Washington State Mental Health Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Social Workers Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) is comprised of nine members. The members include two licensed mental health counselors, two marriage and family therapists, one independent clinical social worker, one advanced social worker, and three consumers. The members of the Advisory Committee are appointed by the Secretary of the Department of Health (Secretary). Members of the Advisory Committee may not hold an office in a professional association for mental health, social work, or marriage and family therapy.

The Advisory Committee is charged with providing advice and assistance on licensing activities related to mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers, as requested by the Secretary. The responsibilities relate to rulemaking, case disposition guidelines related to unprofessional conduct, review of reports of unprofessional conduct or consumer complaints, consumer education, and continuing education and continuing competency programs.

Summary of Bill:

The one member of the Mental Health Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Social Workers Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) that must be an advanced social worker may be either an advanced social worker or an independent clinical social worker.

The prohibition on members of the Advisory Committee holding an office in a relevant professional association applies specifically to holding a governing office or board position.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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) There is a vacancy on the Mental Health Counselor, Marriage and Family Therapist, and Social Worker Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) because of the small number of advanced social workers in the state. Allowing either an advanced social

worker or independent clinical social worker to fill this position on the Advisory Committee will allow for fuller representation of the profession. The bill will allow people who volunteer for committees within professional associations to also serve on the Advisory Committee.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Tarra Simmons, prime sponsor; and Jeremy Arp, National Association of Social Workers—Washington Chapter.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.