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HOUSE BILL 1242

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State of Washington

68th Legislature

2023 Regular Session

By Representatives Dent and Davis

1 AN ACT Relating to creating a behavioral health work group to  
2 study the root causes of rising behavioral health issues in  
3 Washington communities; creating a new section; and providing an  
4 expiration date.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The department of health shall convene  
7 a work group to study the root causes of rising behavioral health  
8 issues in Washington communities. The membership of the work group  
9 shall emphasize individuals with actual, practical experience dealing  
10 with the behavioral health system and shall include:

11 (a) Individuals who have received behavioral health services in a  
12 variety of settings and circumstances throughout the behavioral  
13 health system;

14 (b) Family members of individuals who have received behavioral  
15 health services, including parents;

16 (c) Behavioral health treatment providers with actual experience  
17 providing behavioral health services in various settings, including  
18 crisis behavioral health services. Behavioral health treatment  
19 providers serving on the work group may not represent, or be employed  
20 by, any organizations or interest groups representing the interests  
21 of health care providers or behavioral health stakeholders;

1 (d) Invited tribal representatives with experience providing or  
2 receiving behavioral health services from tribal health departments;

3 (e) Members of the clergy;

4 (f) Law enforcement officers who have training and experience  
5 dealing with individuals with behavioral health conditions or  
6 undergoing behavioral health crises;

7 (g) Behavioral health advocates; and

8 (h) Any other individuals with actual, practical experience  
9 dealing with the behavioral health system deemed appropriate by the  
10 department of health.

11 (2) The work group shall, at a minimum, discuss:

12 (a) The factors that are leading to increased demand for  
13 behavioral health services in Washington;

14 (b) Methods to address behavioral health workforce shortages;

15 (c) The current status of Washington's behavioral health system,  
16 including the barriers to meeting unmet need and any gaps in the  
17 system;

18 (d) The effectiveness of the state's integrated care initiative  
19 in terms of access for the seriously mentally ill, reductions in  
20 hospitalization and institutionalization, improvements in community-  
21 based care, and support for an effective network of community-based  
22 care providers for the seriously mentally ill; and

23 (e) Any other suggestions for improving the behavioral health  
24 system.

25 (3) The work group shall submit a progress report to the governor  
26 and the appropriate committees of the legislature no later than  
27 December 15, 2023. The work group shall submit its findings and  
28 recommendations to the governor and the appropriate committees of the  
29 legislature no later than November 15, 2024.

30 (4) This section expires January 1, 2025.

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