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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5633**

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**State of Washington**

**66th Legislature**

**2019 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Brown, Walsh, Becker, Hasegawa, Zeiger, Keiser, and O'Ban)

1 AN ACT Relating to supporting and expanding behavioral health  
2 workforce pathway programs; adding a new section to chapter 70.185  
3 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The demand for behavioral health and  
6 mental health care expertise exceeds the availability of those  
7 services throughout the state. Washington state has many highly  
8 competent and committed professionals working hard to deliver  
9 behavioral health services. However, there are difficulties  
10 recruiting, educating, training, and retaining a skilled behavioral  
11 health care workforce. There is a need to support pathways to  
12 behavioral health disciplines and incentivize individuals to fill  
13 these essential positions.

14 (2) The area health education centers of eastern and western  
15 Washington play an integral role in the development of the behavioral  
16 health workforce by collaborating with the education system to  
17 increase equity in behavioral health workforce education, reduce the  
18 stigma around behavioral health, improve behavioral health literacy,  
19 and encourage Washingtonians to join and support the behavioral  
20 health workforce. The area health education centers serve rural and

1 urban underserved communities by improving the academic pathway and  
2 education options for health workforce development.

3 (3) It is the intent of the legislature to further support and  
4 expand behavioral health workforce pathway programs provided by the  
5 area health education centers to meet the behavioral health workforce  
6 demands in this state.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 70.185  
8 RCW to read as follows:

9 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this  
10 specific purpose, the department shall receive funds from the state  
11 and provide them to both eastern and western Washington area health  
12 education centers for the purpose of supporting and expanding current  
13 behavioral health workforce academic and career pathway programs.

14 (2) For the purposes of this section, "area health education  
15 center" has the same meaning as the program identified and referred  
16 to in 42 U.S.C. Sec. 294a.

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