
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1598 (Quirk-Silva) - Behavioral sciences

Version: June 10, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: June 29, 2026

Policy Vote: B., P. & E.D. 11 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Janelle Miyashiro

Bill Summary: AB 1598 streamlines licensing timelines for Board of Behavioral Sciences (BBS) associates by removing the annual Law and Ethics exam requirement, extending the validity of both supervised experience hours and exam scores to seven years, and increasing the maximum number of registration renewals. AB 1598 also establishes a two-year hardship extension for associates working in private practice, clarifies licensure exemptions for faith-based counseling, and updates client disclosure and advertising requirements for trainees and interns.

Fiscal Impact: The BBS reports:

- One-time cost of approximately \$133,000 for a limited-term staff to address an anticipated workload backlog resulting from the two-year hardship extension proposed in the bill. This estimate is based on an expected 2,700 extension requests and 1,350 inquiries, and is not absorbable.
- Ongoing annual costs of up to \$12,500 to evaluate an additional year of supervised experience hours for applications, which are anticipated to be absorbable.
- Annual revenue reduction of approximately \$50,000 due to an estimated 20 percent fewer associates attempting the California Law and Ethics exam in their first year of registration, which is anticipated to be absorbable.
- Minor costs to update forms, FAQs, and website content, and to conduct outreach to inform associates of changes to registration and licensure requirements.

The Office of Information Services within the Department of Consumer Affairs estimates costs of approximately \$45,000 to make BreEZe system updates, which is considered absorbable within existing maintenance resources.

Background: The BBS regulates over 148,000 mental health professionals, including Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs), Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs), Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (LPCCs), Licensed Educational Psychologists (LEPs), and their registered Associate counterparts. To begin practicing, associates must hold a qualifying master's degree and register with the BBS, which allows them to work under supervision to accrue the 3,000 experience hours necessary for full licensure. During this initial registration period, which is valid for up to six years across five renewal cycles, associates are required to pass a clinical examination and must attempt the California Law and Ethics exam during their first year and every subsequent renewal period until they pass.

If an associate fails to complete their required hours or exams within the initial six-year timeframe, they may apply for a subsequent registration number. While this subsequent registration allows them to continue accumulating supervised hours, it strictly prohibits

them from providing services in a private practice or professional corporation setting. Once an individual successfully completes all of their educational, supervisory, and examination requirements, they achieve full licensure and are authorized to practice independently within their specific profession's scope.

Proposed Law:

- Specifies that nothing in the LMFT Practice Act, the LCSW Practice Act, and the LPCC Practice Act shall prevent qualified members of other professional groups from doing work of a psychosocial nature consistent with the standards, ethics and scope of practice of their respective professions; specifies that qualified members of other professional groups include physicians and surgeons, registered nurses, licensed psychologists, members of the State Bar, marriage and family therapists, educational psychologists, and clinical social workers.
- Expands the exemption of any priest, rabbi, imam, or minister of the gospel, to include any other religious official of any denomination when providing faith-based counseling as part of their regular professional duties for an established and legally recognizable faith-based entity, such as a church, synagogue, mosque, or other recognized religious organization, if all the following criteria are met: the services are performed solely under the direct auspices of that faith-based entity; a separate fee, beyond their customary compensation from that faith-based entity, is not charged or received; they do not hold themselves out to the public by any title or description of services incorporating the words “psychosocial,” “psychotherapy,” or “marriage and family therapist,” and may not imply that they are licensed or registered to practice marriage and family therapy; the services provided are limited to counseling services provided in a religious or spiritual context and do not involve the diagnosis or treatment of mental health diagnosis.
- Removes the requirement that associates must attempt the California law and ethics examination within the first year of registration and every year thereafter until successful completion of the exam and instead requires the Board to grant eligibility authorizing associates to take the California law and ethics examination upon approval of an application for registration or licensure and submission of the application and fee. Allows applicants to retake the examination, if they fail, after any waiting period specified in regulations, and upon payment of the required fees and submission of the reexamination application.
- Prohibits the Board from issuing a subsequent associate registration number unless the applicant has passed the California law and ethics examination no more than seven years prior to the receipt of the application for the subsequent associate registration number.
- Authorizes the Board to grant an applicant for licensure eligibility to take the clinical examination with completion of all required supervised work experience, education requirements and passage of the California law and ethics examination.
- States that, after January 1, 2030, the California law and ethics examination must be passed within seven years prior to the application for an initial license issuance.

- Authorizes an associate's hours of experience to be gained within seven years prior to the date the application for licensure was received by the Board, except as specified.
- Requires the clinical examination for LMFTs, LCSWs, and LPCCs to be passed no more than seven years prior to the Board's receipt of the application for initial license issuance.
- Authorizes associate marriage and family therapist registration to be renewed a maximum of six times. Prohibits any registration from being renewed or reinstated beyond seven years from the last day of the month it was issued.
- Authorizes an applicant applying for or who currently holds a subsequent associate registration number to request that the Board grant them a one-time, two-consecutive year hardship extension to allow them to be employed or volunteer at one private practice or professional corporation employer with their subsequent associate registration number, as specified.
- Deletes the fee for rescoring an examination.
- Allows an applicant for an educational psychologist license to be credited with experience obtained within seven years immediately preceding the date on which the application for licensure was received by the Board.
- Requires the licensed educational psychologist written examination administered by the Board to be passed no more than seven years prior to the Board's receipt of the application for initial license issuance.
- Requires applicants, registrants, trainees and interns to inform each client or patient prior to initiating any mental health and related services that the person is unlicensed, to provide the name of their employer or if not employed, the name of the entity for which they volunteer, and to disclose that they are under the supervision of a licensed professional; requires any advertisement by a marriage and family therapist trainee to include the following: the trainee's name; disclosure that they are a trainee; the name of the trainee's employer, or if not employed, the name of the entity for which they volunteer; and that the trainee is supervised by a licensed professional.
- Recasts provisions, makes technical, clarifying and conforming changes and deletes obsolete language.

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