
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1598
Author: Quirk-Silva (D)
Amended: 8/19/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE BUS., PROF. & ECON. DEV. COMMITTEE: 11-0, 6/15/26

AYES: Wahab, Choi, Archuleta, Arreguín, Caballero, Grayson, Menjivar, Niello,
Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Umberg

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0, 5/21/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Behavioral sciences

SOURCE: Board of Behavioral Sciences

DIGEST: This bill removes the requirement for associates registered with the Board of Behavior Sciences (BBS or Board) to attempt the California Law and Ethics examination each year in order to renew their registration; requires the California Law and Ethics examination to be passed no more than seven years prior to application for an initial license; increases the amount of time supervised experience hours remain valid from six to seven years; increases the maximum number of associate registration renewals from five to six years, allowing a total of seven years of registration before a new number is required; allows associates with a subsequent registration number to request a one-time, two-year hardship extension to work in one private practice setting with their subsequent registration number; clarifies when faith-based counseling is exempt from licensure, as specified; clarifies advertising and client disclosure requirements for associates, trainees and interns, as specified

Senate Floor amendments of 8/19/26 add language to address chaptering issues with SB 1445.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Exempts any priest, rabbi, or minister of the gospel, or other religious denomination when performing counseling services as part of their pastoral or professionals' duties, or to any person who is admitted to practice law in the state, or a physician and surgeon who provides counseling services as part of their professional practice. (Business & Professions Code (BPC) § 4980.01 (b))
- 2) Specifies that there is nothing in the Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) Practice Act or Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) Practice Act that prevents qualified members of other professional groups from doing work of a psychosocial nature consistent with the standards and ethics of their respective professions. However, these qualified persons must not hold themselves out to the public by any title or description of services incorporating the words "psychosocial", "clinical social worker", or "licensed professional", and must not state that they are licensed to practice clinical social work or professional clinical counseling, unless they are otherwise licensed to provide professional clinical counseling services. (BPC §§ 4996.13 and 4999.22 (a))
- 3) Requires a registrant or applicant for licensure as a marriage and family therapist, a clinical social worker, or a professional clinical counselor to do the following: passage of a California Law and Ethics examination within the first year of registration; complete all required supervised work experience and education experience; and passage of a clinical examination administered by the Board or by a public organization, as specified. (BPC §§ 4980.397 (a-c), 4992.05 (a) and 4999.53 (a-c))
- 4) Requires the Board, effective January 1, 2016, to issue a clinical social worker license and a professional clinical counselor license to each applicant who passes a California Law and Ethics examination. States that an applicant who has successfully passed a previously administered written examination may be subsequently required to take and pass another written examination. (BPC §§ 4996.1 (a) and 4999.50 (a))
- 5) Requires a registrant or applicant to obtain a passing score on a board-administered California Law and Ethics examination to qualify for licensure as a marriage and family therapist, a clinical social worker, or a professional clinical counselor; allows an applicant to retake the examination, if they fail, upon payment of the required fees without further application; prohibits the Board from issuing a subsequent registration number unless the applicant has passed the California law and examination; requires a registrant to complete a

minimum of three hours of continuing education on the subject of California Law and Ethics during each renewal period to be eligible to renew their registration regardless of whether they have passed the California Law and Ethics examination; and requires the coursework be obtained from a board-accepted provider of continuing education. (BPC §§ 4980.399 (a-e), 4992.09 (a-e) and 4999.55 (a-e))

- 6) Requires a marriage and family therapist and a professional clinical counselor to have an active associate registration with the Board to gain post degree hours of supervised experience, except as specified, and requires experience hours to have not been gained more than six years prior to the date the application for licensure was received by the Board. (BPC §§ 4980.43 (a) and (c)(7) and 4999.46 (a)(e))
- 7) Specifies that an applicant for licensure as a marriage and family therapist, a clinical social worker, or a professional clinical counselor is not eligible to participate in the clinical examination if the applicant fails to obtain a passing score on the clinical examination within seven years from their initial attempt, unless the applicant takes and obtains a passing score on the current version of the California Law and Ethics examination. (BPC §§ 4980.50 (g), 4999.12 (g) and 4999.52 (i))
- 8) Specifies that a passing score on the clinical examination for a marriage and family therapist, a clinical social worker, or a professional clinical counselor must be accepted by the Board for a period of seven years from the date the examination was taken. (BPC §§ 4980.50 (h), 4992.1 (h), and 4999.52 (j))
- 9) Specifies that an applicant for licensure as an educational psychologist shall not be credited with experience obtained more than six years immediately preceding the date on which the application for licensure was received by the Board; and specifies that a passing score on the licensed educational psychologist written examination must be accepted by the Board for a period of seven years from the date the examination was taken. (BPC §§ 4989.20 (a)(5)(6)(B)(7)(B) and (a)(8))
- 10) Requires an associate marriage and family therapist prior to performing any mental health and related services to do the following: inform each client or patient that the person is an unlicensed registered associate marriage and family therapist; provide the person's registration number; the name of person's employer; and whether the person is under the supervision of a

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), LCSW, LPCC, Licensed Educational Psychologist (LEP), a licensed psychologist, or a licensed physician certified in psychiatry by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (BPC § 4980.44 (a))

This bill:

- 1) 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, as specified.
- 2) 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 and meets the required criteria, as specified.
- 3) 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.
- 4) 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.
- 5) States that, after January 1, 2030, the California law and ethics examination must be passed within seven years prior to the application of 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 LPCC's 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 may 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; and deletes the fee for rescore an examination.

- 6) 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, provide the name of their employer or if not employed, the name of the entity for which they volunteer, and that they are under the supervision of a licensed professional; requires any advertisement by a marriage and family therapist trainee 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; and recasts provisions, makes technical, clarifying and conforming changes and deletes obsolete language.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, the BBS reports a 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 this bill. The bill will also result in: 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;

and minor costs to update forms, FAQs, and website content, and to conduct outreach to inform associates of changes to registration and licensure requirements.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/19/26)

Board of Behavioral Sciences (source)
California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/19/26)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: The Board of Behavioral Sciences writes, “Becoming licensed requires completing a graduate degree, passing multiple exams, and accumulating thousands of hours of supervised experience—often while earning low wages. The process is time-consuming and costly, and many individuals experience life events such as medical issues, caregiving responsibilities, or financial hardship that may delay or interrupt their progress. These challenges can disproportionately affect individuals from underrepresented communities and contribute to workforce shortages in behavioral health. This bill aims to make the path to licensure more accessible and responsive to real-world challenges faced by applicants without compromising the standards required for safe and competent practice.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0, 5/21/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Arambula, Chen, Garcia, Lackey, Ramos, Celeste Rodriguez

Prepared by: Anna Billy / B., P. & E.D. /
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