

Second Regular Session
Seventy-fifth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 26-0935.01 Anna Petrini x5497

SENATE BILL 26-153

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Kolker and Simpson,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Bacon and Martinez,

Senate Committees
Education

House Committees

A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 CONCERNING GRADUATE ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR A LICENSED
102 SCHOOL COUNSELOR, AND, IN CONNECTION THEREWITH,
103 ESTABLISHING A MINIMUM NUMBER OF CREDIT HOURS
104 REQUIRED FOR SPECIAL SERVICES LICENSURE WITH A SCHOOL
105 COUNSELOR ENDORSEMENT.

Bill Summary

(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)

To qualify for an initial special services license as a school counselor, an applicant must hold a master's degree or higher from an

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.
Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.
Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.

accredited institution of higher education. The degree must be in school counseling and require completion of at least 48 graduate semester credit hours.

1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2 **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly
3 finds and declares that:

4 (a) Schools play a critical role in preparing students for academic
5 achievement, postsecondary education, and participation in the
6 workforce;

7 (b) Students' ability to succeed academically is often influenced
8 by personal, developmental, and social challenges that may affect school
9 engagement and learning;

10 (c) The social, emotional, and behavioral health needs of students
11 in Colorado schools have increased significantly in recent years. Failing
12 to address these needs affects students' academic success, school
13 attendance, safety, and long-term well-being.

14 (d) School counselors provide essential services to students and
15 schools by identifying and confronting obstacles to student learning and
16 supporting students with social and emotional development, academic
17 planning, and career and postsecondary readiness;

18 (e) In many schools, particularly in rural and smaller districts and
19 underserved communities, a licensed school counselor is often the only
20 readily available professional whose preparation includes training in
21 counseling practices and student development;

22 (f) School counselors are increasingly called upon to perform risk
23 and safety assessments, provide short-term counseling and crisis
24 intervention when tragedy strikes a school, coordinate services with

1 families and community providers, and support students experiencing
2 trauma and other behavioral health challenges;

3 (g) Because of these responsibilities, it is important that
4 individuals seeking licensure as school counselors receive comprehensive
5 graduate-level preparation that includes coursework in counseling
6 practices, student development, and strategies to help students
7 experiencing stress, behavioral challenges, or other barriers to academic
8 success;

9 (h) National standards for counselor preparation, including those
10 established by recognized accrediting bodies, typically require graduate
11 programs of at least sixty semester credit hours and include coursework
12 related to mental health counseling, assessment, and crisis response; and

13 (i) Establishing minimum graduate credit requirements will help
14 ensure that school counselors entering Colorado schools possess the
15 knowledge and skills necessary to support students effectively.

16 (2) Therefore, the general assembly declares that establishing
17 minimum graduate-level preparation requirements for licensed school
18 counselors is necessary to provide effective student services, promote safe
19 and supportive learning environments, and ensure that students across
20 Colorado have access to well-prepared school counseling professionals.

21 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-60.5-210, **amend**
22 (1)(a)(I)(B) as follows:

23 **22-60.5-210. Types of special services licenses issued - term.**

24 (1) The department of education is designated as the sole agency
25 authorized to issue the following types of special services licenses to
26 persons of good moral character:

27 (a) **Initial special services license.**

1 (I) The department of education, in its discretion, may issue an
2 initial special services license to any applicant who:

3 (B) Has met the standards of the state board of education
4 concerning academic and professional preparation, ~~and~~ experience, and
5 performance, as appropriate for the subject matter area or areas for which
6 ~~such~~ THE initial special services license is to be endorsed; EXCEPT THAT,
7 TO QUALIFY FOR SPECIAL SERVICES LICENSURE WITH A SCHOOL
8 COUNSELOR ENDORSEMENT, AN APPLICANT MUST HOLD, FROM AN
9 ACCREDITED INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION, A MASTER'S DEGREE OR
10 HIGHER IN SCHOOL COUNSELING THAT CONSISTS OF AT LEAST FORTY-EIGHT
11 GRADUATE SEMESTER CREDIT HOURS.

12 **SECTION 3. Safety clause.** The general assembly finds,
13 determines, and declares that this act is necessary for the immediate
14 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety or for appropriations for
15 the support and maintenance of the departments of the state and state
16 institutions.