**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, SO AS TO ENACT THE “VETERANS NURSING DEGREE OPPORTUNITY ACT”; AND BY ADDING ARTICLE 3 TO CHAPTER 33, TITLE 40 SO AS TO AUTHORIZE THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF VETERAN ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE IN NURSING DEGREE PROGRAMS AND VETERAN BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING DEGREE PROGRAMS TO ENABLE MILITARY VETERANS WITH RELEVANT MILITARY TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE TO EXPEDITE THE TRANSITION FROM MILITARY LIFE TO A PROFESSIONAL CAREER IN NURSING, TO PROVIDE NECESSARY DEFINITIONS, TO REQUIRE A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BY THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION, STATE BOARD OF NURSING, BOARD FOR TECHNICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION, AND DIVISION OF VETERANS’ AFFAIRS TO IDENTIFY GAPS BETWEEN RELEVANT MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND DEGREES APPROVED BY THE STATE BOARD OF NURSING AND LICENSURE BY THE BOARD, AND TO APPROVE CURRICULUM TO ENABLE MILITARY VETERANS TO APPLY SUCH EDUCATION AND TRAINING TOWARD REQUIREMENTS FOR AN ASSOCIATE’S DEGREE IN NURSING OR A BACHELOR’S DEGREE IN NURSING AND LICENSURE AS A LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE OR REGISTERED NURSE, AMONG OTHER THINGS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. This act must be known and may be cited as the “Veterans Nursing Degree Opportunity Act”.

SECTION 2. Chapter 33, Title 40 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Article 3

Veteran Nursing Degrees and Certification

Section 40‑33‑310. For purposes of this article:

(1) ‘Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education’ means the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education created in Section 59‑53‑10.

(2) ‘Board of Nursing’ means the State Board of Nursing created in Section 40‑33‑10.

(3) ‘Division of Veterans’ Affairs’ means the Division of Veterans’ Affairs created within the Department of Administration in Section 25‑11‑10.

(4) ‘Service member’ means any person who, at the time of application for licensure to any state licensing agency, is an active duty member of the United States armed forces or any reserve component of the United States armed forces or the National Guard of any state, commonwealth, or territory of the United States or the District of Columbia, and shall also include any veteran whose active duty service concluded within the preceding two years before submitting his or her application for licensure.

Section 40‑33‑320. (A) The purpose of this article is to provide a gateway for military veterans to transition from military life to a professional career in nursing by authorizing the development and implementation of Veteran Associate of Science in Nursing degree (VASN) programs and Veteran Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree (VBSN) programs. These programs are intended to enable veteran military clinical personnel, such as medics and corpsmen, to accelerate the process for obtaining associate’s degrees and bachelor’s degrees in nursing by awarding academic and clinical credit or waivers of academic and clinical credit for relevant education, experience, and skills acquired from their military service.

(B) The Commission on Higher Education, State Board of Nursing, Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education, and Division of Veterans’ Affairs are directed to collaborate in identifying gaps between relevant military education and training and academic and training requirements for undergraduate nursing education programs and degrees approved by the State Board of Nursing and licensure by the board, and to approve curriculum to enable military veterans to apply such education and training to the requirements toward requirements for an associate’s degree in nursing or a bachelor’s degree in nursing and licensure as a licensed practical nurse or registered nurse. Within thirty days after making this determination, the State Board of Nursing shall compile information about any additional training that must be completed by service members with varying levels of relevant military training and experience in order to bridge the gap to obtain licensure as a licensed practical nurse or a registered nurse in this State, and shall post this information on its website in order to aid:

(1) educational institutions in building and obtaining approval for gap‑bridging programs; and

(2) service members in identifying outstanding requirements for licensure as a licensed practical nurse or registered nurse.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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