COMMITTEE REPORT

January 15, 2020

**H. 4404**

Introduced by Reps. Stringer, Herbkersman, W. Newton, Yow, Huggins, Ballentine, Erickson, B. Cox, Elliott, Allison, Forrest and G.M. Smith

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Read the first time April 4, 2019.

**THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND PUBLIC WORKS**

To whom was referred a Bill (H. 4404) 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, etc., respectfully

**REPORT:**

That they have duly and carefully considered the same and recommend that the same do pass with amendment:

Amend the bill, as and if amended, by deleting all after the enacting words and inserting:

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

(4) ‘Commission on Higher Education means the Commission on Higher Education created in Section 59‑103‑10.

(5) ‘South Carolina Nurses Association’ means the membership organization that represents all South Carolina registered nurses.

(6) ‘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 at participating South Carolina public and independent colleges and institutions 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, South Carolina Nurses Association, and Department of Veterans’ Affairs are directed to collaborate in a study to identify gaps between relevant military education and training and the academic and training requirements for undergraduate nursing education programs and degrees approved by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, and accepted by the State Board of Nursing and licensure by the board, and to make recommendations to enable participating colleges and institutions to apply such education and training 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 six months after the effective date of this act, the Commission on Higher Education and Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education shall share the findings of the group with the colleges and institutions having nursing programs. The collaborating entities will also create a plan to promote and market these opportunities available for veterans in order to aid:

(1) educational institutions in designing and obtaining funding through federal, state, or private grants for gap‑bridging Veteran Associate of Science in Nursing degrees or Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree programs; and

(2) service members in identifying prospective requirements for licensure as a licensed practical nurse or registered nurse through either, a Veteran Associate of Science in Nursing degree or a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program.”

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

Renumber sections to conform.

Amend title to conform.

MERITA A. ALLISON for Committee.

**STATEMENT OF ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT**

**Explanation of Fiscal Impact**

**Amended by House Education and Public Works on May 1, 2019**

**State Expenditure**

This bill creates the Veterans Nursing Degree Opportunity Act, which provides an accelerated pathway to a degree in nursing for military service members. This bill authorizes the development and implementation of Veteran Associate of Science in Nursing (VASN) and Veteran Bachelor of Science in Nursing (VBSN) degree programs. These programs will award academic and clinical credit, or waivers of credit, for relevant education, experience, and skills acquired during military service, thus enabling certain military clinical personnel to accelerate the degree process.

This bill requires a collaborative effort between CHE, the Board of Nursing, SBTCE, the South Carolina Nurses Association, and the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to identify gaps between knowledge gained by military clinical personnel and the requirements for an associate’s or bachelor’s in nursing. The agencies must also approve curriculum that will enable military veterans to apply their experience and training toward degree requirements. In addition, the board must post information concerning the additional training requirements to their website. Institutions of higher learning will use this information should they choose to develop these accelerated degree programs.

**Commission on Higher Education.** This bill charges CHE with additional responsibilities that the agency is able to manage within existing appropriations. Therefore, this bill will have no expenditure impact on CHE. Institutions of higher learning would have the option of building these accelerated programs. Because the requirements and the demand for these gap-bridging programs are unknown, the costs to the institutions cannot be estimated. In addition, the number of institutions choosing to implement these programs is unknown. Therefore, the expenditure impact to institutions is undetermined.

**State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education.** This bill charges SBTCE with additional responsibilities that the agency is able to manage within existing appropriations. Therefore, this bill will have no expenditure impact on SBTCE. Technical colleges would have the option of building these accelerated programs. Because the requirements and the demand for these gap-bridging programs are unknown, the costs to the institutions cannot be estimated. In addition, the number of institutions choosing to implement these programs is unknown. Therefore, the expenditure impact to technical colleges is undetermined.

**Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.** This bill creates additional responsibilities for the Board of Nursing, which is under the regulation of LLR. LLR indicates that this bill will have a minimal impact on the board, and expects to manage the additional responsibilities using existing resources.

**Department of Veterans’ Affairs.** This bill requires the Department of Veterans’ Affairs to collaborate with other agencies in order to identify gaps between military education and training and the requirements for undergraduate nursing degrees. In addition, the department will work with other agencies to approve curriculum for accelerated nursing degree programs.

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs is a newly created agency that will officially become active on July 1, 2019. Until then, the Division of Veterans’ Affairs operates within the Department of Administration (Admin). Admin indicates that the provisions of this bill may be accomplished with the use of existing staff and resources. Therefore, this bill will have no expenditure impact on the Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

**Introduced on April 4, 2019**

**State Expenditure**

This bill creates the Veterans Nursing Degree Opportunity Act, which provides an accelerated pathway to a degree in nursing for military service members. This bill authorizes the development and implementation of Veteran Associate of Science in Nursing (VASN) and Veteran Bachelor of Science in Nursing (VBSN) degree programs. These programs will award academic and clinical credit, or waivers of credit, for relevant education, experience, and skills acquired during military service, thus enabling certain military clinical personnel to accelerate the degree process.

This bill requires a collaborative effort between CHE, the Board of Nursing, SBTCE, and Admin to identify gaps between knowledge gained by military clinical personnel and the requirements for an associate’s or bachelor’s in nursing. The agencies must also approve curriculum that will enable military veterans to apply their experience and training toward degree requirements. In addition, the board must post information concerning the additional training requirements to their website. Institutions of higher learning will use this information should they choose to develop these accelerated degree programs.

**Commission on Higher Education.** This bill charges CHE with additional responsibilities that the agency is able to manage within existing appropriations. Therefore, this bill will have no expenditure impact on CHE. Institutions of higher learning would have the option of building these accelerated programs. Because the requirements and the demand for these gap-bridging programs are unknown, the costs to the institutions cannot be estimated. In addition, the number of institutions choosing to implement these programs is unknown. Therefore, the expenditure impact to institutions is undetermined.

**State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education.** This bill charges SBTCE with additional responsibilities that the agency is able to manage within existing appropriations. Therefore, this bill will have no expenditure impact on SBTCE. Technical colleges would have the option of building these accelerated programs. Because the requirements and the demand for these gap-bridging programs are unknown, the costs to the institutions cannot be estimated. In addition, the number of institutions choosing to implement these programs is unknown. Therefore, the expenditure impact to technical colleges is undetermined.

**Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.** This bill creates additional responsibilities for the Board of Nursing, which is under the regulation of LLR. LLR indicates that this bill will have a minimal impact on the board, and expects to manage the additional responsibilities using existing resources.

**Department of Administration.** This bill requires the Division of Veterans’ Affairs to collaborate with other agencies in order to identify gaps between military education and training and the requirements for undergraduate nursing degrees. In addition, the division will work with other agencies to approve curriculum for accelerated nursing degree programs. Admin indicates that this may be accomplished with the use of existing staff and resources. Therefore, this bill will have no expenditure impact on Admin.

Frank A. Rainwater, Executive Director

Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office

**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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