

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HCR 4403

As Reported By House Committee On:
Commerce & Labor

Brief Description: Approving the recommendations of the 1996 update of the Work Force Training and Education Coordinating Board's comprehensive plan.

Sponsors: Representatives Carlson, Conway, Kenney, Dickerson, Ogden, Keiser, Radcliff, Mason, Regala, Costa, Lantz, Cooper, Tokuda and Butler.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/13/97, 3/27/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives McMorris, Chairman; Honeyford, Vice Chairman; Wood, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Boldt; Clements; Cole and Lisk.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Conway, Ranking Minority Member; and Hatfield.

Staff: Pam Madson (786-7166).

Background: The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board was established in 1991, in part, as a response to a need to coordinate and direct a fragmented and complex workforce training and education system. In establishing the board, the Legislature found there was no comprehensive and strategic plan to guide all parts of the system and make it responsive.

The board includes 11 representatives: three from business, three from labor, three from state government including the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the executive director of the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the commissioner of Employment Security, a member representing under-served individuals, and a chairperson appointed by the Governor.

The board was given a series of tasks, one of which was to develop and maintain a state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education. The plan was first

issued in 1994, and a year later the Legislature directed the board to update the plan every two years and to bring the plan before the Legislature for approval or alteration. Agencies' actions are evaluated in light of the plan and their progress in implementing the plan is part of the update.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Legislature finds that in order to assess the effectiveness of the work force training system and evaluate the potential for success of the comprehensive plan, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board must identify workforce training programs and make specific recommendations on modifying, consolidating, initiating, or eliminating programs.

The Legislature supports the continued efforts of the work force development system partners to fulfill their commitments under the comprehensive plan pending its adoption.

The Legislature appreciates the diligence of the board in drafting the plan, but prefers to approve the comprehensive plan along with action taken on board reports and recommendations required under HB 2211. This bill directs the board to prepare a comprehensive report on all work force training programs in Washington and report back to the Legislature by December 1, 1997. House Bill 2211 also directs the board to make recommendations for modifying, consolidating, or eliminating programs based on previous evaluation reports and the comprehensive report of work force training programs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original resolution approved the recommendations of the comprehensive plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: Highlights of the comprehensive plan's recommendations include support for the school-to-work initiative, linkages to economic development efforts, coordinated work force training services through one-stop career centers, continued accountability and increased public awareness of work force training needs. School-to-work transition: School- to-work transition is a good vehicle for education to keep pace with changes in the world of work. It will take many different forms in different school districts around the state. It will allow students to experience different work environments to help them make career choices and assess their training needs for different occupations. Linkages to economic development: Businesses have a continuing need for technically trained and trainable workers, and some businesses are having difficulty finding trained workers. For many of these workers, changes in technology will require lifelong learning for many workers. The comprehensive plan accurately assesses the needs of Washington business and of its

citizens who seek family wage jobs. The skill level of the current and future workforce is a major determinant of the kind of economic development that can take place in this state. Individuals are not coming out of school with enough skills to enter the job market. One-stop career centers: This is a national initiative started a few years ago in order to deal with the fragmented state of employment and training services. The goal is to integrate the elements of the system to reduce confusion and make them more accessible. The model is one of three tiers. The first tier is self-directed and provides individuals with a broad array of job search information for them to access. The second tier is assisted services and includes workshops and benefits for which some staff assistance is required to determine eligibility. The third tier involves more intensive individualized service and requires more staff involvement. This model focuses staff resources where they are most needed while serving as many people as possible. Cross-training of staff provides greater service and encourages collaboration. Funding is still limited by eligibility requirements of specific programs. Public awareness: There is a need to increase public awareness that most jobs do not need a four- year degree but do need some increased level of skill. The plan recognizes the need to integrate welfare reform and the need to move recipients into the workforce. Training may not require two to three years, but rather a shorter period of time. There are training resources to address short-term training that can be utilized.

Testimony Against: It is unclear where this effort is going. As envisioned, it is a very expensive system. We don't know where the money is going now. Positive incentives must be devised to have the private sector develop this system. Is it the job of government to supply workers? The plan treats people as products. The government will predetermine job choices. Students will be matched to jobs. The certificate of mastery will become a work permit. Academics will be lost. This plan reflects a national agenda for a planned economy that threatens free enterprise and economic freedom. There are many existing activities for people to use to find jobs without mandating job training.

Testified: (In support) Ellen O'Brien-Saunders, WorkForce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Corey Nuvell, Washington Real Entrepreneurship Program; Marcus Morgan; Shelia Richardson; Mary Witting-Williams, U.S. West Communications; Travis Sneider, Snohomish County Economic Development; Larry Ring; Jeff Johnson, Washington State Labor Council; Cathy Jenner, South King County Private Industry Council; Liz Dunbar, Department of Social and Health Services; Gena Wikstom, Washington Federation of Private Career Schools; and Stuart Elway. (Opposed) Ian Elliot; Roxanne Sitler; Cris Shardelman; Sandy Elliot. (Comments) George F. Tyler.