

SENATE BILL REPORT

SCR 8406

As of March 17, 2005

Brief Description: Approving the 2004 update to the state comprehensive plan for work force training.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Schmidt, McAuliffe, Franklin, Esser, Keiser, Pridemore, Kline, Shin and Rasmussen; by request of Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce, Research & Development: 3/17/05.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Staff: John Dziedzic (786-7784)

Background: The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (the Board) is composed of representatives of labor, business, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Employment Security Department, and a representative of target populations. The Governor appoints the chair of the Board.

The Board was created in 1991 to perform strategic planning and evaluation of the state's workforce training system, and to provide advice on the subject to the Governor and Legislature. In fulfilling this requirement, the Board updates a comprehensive plan every two years, which is submitted to the Legislature. The agencies represented on the Board are expected to conduct their respective programs consistent with the comprehensive plan as approved by the Legislature.

Summary of Bill: The Legislature recognizes that the state faces challenges in managing workforce programs to: (1) match the needs of employers for skilled workers and supply of state residents able to meet those needs; (2) enable workers to make transitions to opportunities in a changing economy; and (3) assist target populations in moving up the job ladder.

The Board recommends the following six strategic opportunities in the comprehensive plan:

- 1) increasing postsecondary education and training capacity at the sub-baccalaureate level and targeting resources to expand capacity in high demand programs while ensuring that individuals have access to a broad range of opportunities;
- 2) reducing dropouts and holding schools accountable for retaining students through graduation;
- 3) expanding and sustaining industry skill panels using partnerships of employers, educators, and labor to foster innovative workforce training;
- 4) increasing training linked to retention support for low-income individuals;

- 5) increasing basic skills and English as a second language instruction that is integrated with occupational skills training; and
- 6) expanding customized training for incumbent workers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Testimony For: In developing the comprehensive plan, the Board heard from a wide range of stakeholders, including business, labor and the education system. The plan represents a consensus position of these stakeholders and received a unanimous vote of the Board. Adoption of this resolution will be viewed as an expression of legislative support of the six strategic opportunities contained in the report. The strategic planning represented by the comprehensive plan has produced nationally recognized programs, and has accomplished better coordination of both public and private workforce development efforts. These include skills centers, which begin the career pipeline for the next generation, to drop-out prevention. The plan also recognizes the need to increase the capacity of both baccalaureate and non-baccalaureate post-secondary education.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Bryan Wilson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Mary Ellen O'Keefe, North Seattle Community College; John Aultman, New Market Skills Center; Mike Hudson, Association of Washington Business; John Loyle, Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council.