

HB 2630-S2.E - DIGEST

(AS OF HOUSE 2ND READING 2/09/06)

Requires the college board and a nonprofit organization that has been established to address work force development issues by a recognized statewide organization of employers representing a majority of employers in the state to, in consultation with the work force training and education coordinating board, a statewide labor organization, and a statewide high-technology organization: (1) Identify high demand occupations, which are occupations where employer demand for workers exceeds the supply of qualified job applicants;

(2) Convene or use existing industry groups, such as industry skill panels or other industry or occupational entities, to identify the skill sets that workers need in the high demand occupations;

(3) Develop credentials that are recognized by postsecondary institutions and employers statewide and that are based on the attainment of the skill sets needed in occupations in high demand sectors;

(4) Market the credentials or certificates to potential students and employers as a way for them to advance in their careers; and

(5) Gain recognition of the credentials or certificates by employers.

Directs the college board to develop and implement a work force education program known as the opportunity grant program to provide funding for low-income students enrolled in the program, including but not limited to funding tuition, books, fees, and child care expenses.

Requires the college board to: (1) Begin developing the program no later than March 15, 2006, with student enrollment to begin no later than January 1, 2007; and

(2) Submit a progress report to the fiscal and higher education committees of the legislature by January 15, 2008.

Provides that, subject to approval of the board, the Washington state institute for public policy shall conduct a study to include: (1) A review of and recommendations for consolidating and simplifying the delivery of state-funded and federally funded work force education programs and work force education aid offered to students in this state, with a goal of achieving easier access to postsecondary education for students;

(2) A description of barriers that exist to combining work force education programs and work force education aid, such as state or federal statutes, rules, or regulations, and the relief that may be available through federal waivers;

(3) An estimate of the funding gap between available work force education aid and the financial needs of students living in this state;

(4) A description of barriers to access to and completion of work force education programs in this state; and

(5) Recommendations for increasing participation and completion rates for work force education programs.

Requires the Washington state institute for public policy to submit its report on the study to the legislature by November 15, 2006, and must coordinate its study and research with the Washington Learns study of postsecondary education.