

HB 1096-S2 - DIGEST

(DIGEST AS ENACTED)

Finds that: (1) The economic trends of globalization and technological change are increasing the demand for higher and differently skilled workers than in the past;

(2) Increasing Washington's economic competitiveness requires increasing the supply of skilled workers in the state;

(3) Improving the labor market competitiveness of all Washington residents requires that all residents have access to postsecondary education; and

(4) Community and technical college workforce training programs and Washington state apprenticeship and training council-approved apprenticeship programs provide effective and efficient pathways for people to enter high wage, high skill careers while also meeting the needs of the economy.

Requires the college board to develop and implement a workforce education program known as the opportunity grant program to provide funding for students enrolled at qualified institutions of higher education in opportunity grant-eligible programs of study as described in this act. Students enrolled in the opportunity grant program are eligible for: (1) Funding for tuition and mandatory fees at the public community and technical college rate, prorated if the credit load is less than full time, paid directly to the educational institution; and

(2) An additional one thousand dollars per academic year for books, tools, and supplies, prorated if the credit load is less than full time.

Declares that funding under this act is limited to a maximum forty-five credits or the equivalent in an opportunity grant-eligible program of study, including required related courses. No student may receive opportunity grant funding for more than forty-five credits or for more than three years from initial receipt of grant funds in one or a combination of programs.

Requires the college board, in partnership with business, labor, and the workforce training and education coordinating board, to: (1) Identify job specific training programs offered by qualified postsecondary institutions that lead to a credential, certificate, or degree in high demand occupations, which are occupations where data show that employer demand for workers exceeds the supply of qualified job applicants throughout the state or in a specific region, and where training capacity is underutilized;

(2) Gain recognition of the credentials, certificates, and degrees by Washington's employers and labor organizations. The college board shall designate these recognized

credentials, certificates, and degrees as "opportunity grant-eligible programs of study"; and

(3) Market the credentials, certificates, and degrees to potential students, businesses, and apprenticeship programs as a way for individuals to advance in their careers and to better meet the needs of industry.