

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1395

As of March 17, 2009

Title: An act relating to clarifying terms for workforce and economic development.

Brief Description: Clarifying terms for workforce and economic development.

Sponsors: Representatives Wallace, Anderson, Hasegawa, Sells, Chase and Kenney; by request of Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/09/09, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 3/17/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: The term “high demand” in reference to occupations and programs of study has become popular in recent years, and the term, which appears in statutes, has been interpreted inconsistently. To address this issue, the Governor’s office convened a workgroup of agencies to develop common definitions. The workgroup included the Workforce Board; the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC); the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; the Employment Security Department; the Department of Labor and Industries; the Higher Education Coordinating Board; and the Council of Presidents. The workgroup worked over the 2007 legislative interim to develop common definitions for the terms "high employer demand program of study," "high-demand occupation," and "high student demand program of study."

The workgroup's common definition for high employer demand program of study is an undergraduate or graduate certificate, apprenticeship, or degree program in which the number of students prepared for employment per year (from in-state institutions) is substantially less than the number of projected job openings per year in that field – statewide or in a sub-state region. The common definition for high-demand occupation is an occupation with a substantial number of current or projected employment opportunities. The common definition for high student demand program of study is an undergraduate or graduate certificate or degree program, or apprenticeship, in which student demand substantially exceeds program capacity.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: The common terms and definitions from the workgroup are inserted into several different statutes. "High demand field" is replaced with "high demand occupation" in a section that defines work activity for the WorkFirst program. "High demand programs" is replaced with "high employer demand programs of study" in the statute pertaining to the pilot program to improve services to customers of vocational rehabilitation under the Department of Labor and Industries. The common definition for "high demand occupation" is inserted into the statute pertaining to the Unemployment Compensation Training Benefits Program. The common definition for "high employer demand program of study" is added to the definition section of the chapter for the SBCTC, and the term replaces the term "high demand occupations" in a section on identification of job training programs in the chapter for the SBCTC.

The changes to the terminology and the added definitions are intended to create clarity and consistency without changing policy.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Over the past few years, work has been done on reaching common definitions for terms related to "high demand" in workforce development. The bill will provide a more consistent framework in efforts to develop the workforce to satisfy employer demand. This bill is exactly the same as SSB 5317.

OTHER: Career colleges should be included in the definition of "technical colleges" and "qualified institutions of higher education."

Persons Testifying: PRO: Maddy Thompson, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Amber Carter, Association of Washington Business.

OTHER: Steve Lindstrom, NW Career Colleges Foundation.