

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5317

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, February 13, 2009

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

Brief Description: Clarifying terms for workforce and economic development.

Sponsors: Senators Shin, Kilmer, Jarrett, Delvin, Kastama and Jacobsen; by request of Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/03/09, 2/13/09 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5317 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Kilmer, Chair; Jarrett, Vice Chair; Becker, Ranking Minority Member; Jacobsen, Kastama, McAuliffe, Pflug, Shin and Stevens.

Staff: Wendy Malkin (786-7434)

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

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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.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): 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.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Clarifies that the activities listed in section two of the bill, including the identification of high employer demand programs of study, must be done by the SBCTC, labor and business, and the Workforce Board for the purposes of identifying opportunity grant-eligible programs of study and other job training programs.

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 on Original Bill: PRO: Over the past few years, work has been done on reaching common definitions for terms related to “high demand” in workforce development. It was the Governor's office that initiated the workgroup that came to consensus on common terms and common definitions. The bill inserts the common terms and definitions into statute without making any policy changes. The bill will provide a more consistent framework in efforts to develop the workforce to satisfy employer demand.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Shin, prime sponsor; Bryan Wilson, Workforce Board; Amber Carter, Association of Washington Businesses.