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SENATE BILL 6141

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State of Washington                      62nd Legislature                      2012 Regular Session

By Senators Kilmer, Tom, Shin, Kastama, Ericksen, Chase, and Frockt

Read first time 01/12/12.              Referred to Committee on Economic  
Development, Trade & Innovation.

1            AN ACT Relating to a lifelong learning program; adding a new  
2 section to chapter 28C.18 RCW; and creating a new section.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 1.**    The legislature finds that training and  
5 education is vitally important in the development of skilled workers  
6 and the promotion of an internationally competitive economy. It is the  
7 intent of the legislature to ensure that all state citizens are  
8 provided with the opportunity to succeed and that no workers are  
9 abandoned in their pursuit of excellence in training and education. It  
10 is the further intent of the legislature to build a highly skilled and  
11 globally competitive workforce by supporting the movement of low-  
12 skilled workers into average-skilled jobs and moving average-skilled  
13 workers into high-skilled jobs to achieve a world class competitive  
14 workforce that is sustainable through the coming decades. The  
15 legislature intends, through the establishment of a lifelong learning  
16 program, to address the challenge of providing low-skilled workers with  
17 postsecondary education and training and ultimately achieving  
18 excellence in all sectors of our workforce and economy. The

1 legislature intends the lifelong learning program to develop  
2 partnerships and mechanisms through which:

3 (1) Workers take responsibility for advancing in their careers and  
4 improving their economic future by investing their own funds in their  
5 training and education;

6 (2) Employers promote the success of their businesses, workers, and  
7 communities by investing in their workers' lifelong learning accounts;

8 (3) Educational and training institutions promote the establishment  
9 of lifelong learning accounts to equip students and their employers  
10 with a means to meet the financial demands of higher education tuition  
11 costs and the competitive needs of industries;

12 (4) State and local government institutions provide the  
13 infrastructure, incentives, and proactive support for employees,  
14 employers, and institutions to invest in lifelong learning accounts;  
15 and

16 (5) Financial institutions and nonprofit organizations invest their  
17 resources to provide the initial web of support to establish pilot  
18 projects, foster program development, assist in impact evaluation, and  
19 assist in migrating the program achievements and best practices across  
20 other communities and industries in the United States.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28C.18 RCW  
22 to read as follows:

23 (1) A lifelong learning program is established within the workforce  
24 training and education coordinating board to provide the opportunity  
25 for employees, with the support of their employers, to create  
26 educational savings accounts that may be used to fund approved  
27 education and training. In operating the program, the board:

28 (a) May partner with, and coordinate the voluntary alignment of  
29 services with, financial institutions and other public, private, and  
30 nonprofit organizations in order to enable low-wage workers to attain  
31 high-skilled and high-wage jobs in their communities;

32 (b) Must work with its partners to:

33 (i) Establish the policies, rules, and procedures, including but  
34 not limited to standards for fund management and for approving career  
35 development plans and education and training, that support the  
36 operation of the program;

1 (ii) Ensure the program is marketed to various geographic areas and  
2 industry sectors of the state, as well as to low-wage workers, their  
3 employers, and the communities in which they reside; and

4 (iii) Help partners coordinate new career counseling services with  
5 existing online and other providers, including the state's WorkSource  
6 system;

7 (c) May work with financial institutions to encourage their full  
8 engagement in:

9 (i) The management functions of the program, including managing  
10 lifelong learning accounts for individual employers and their  
11 respective employees consistent with program requirements and  
12 guidelines;

13 (ii) Adding value to the program through the provision of financial  
14 literacy and career counseling; and

15 (iii) Aligning their activities under a consolidated partnership,  
16 which may include the designation of one fund manager to streamline the  
17 establishment and management of the program; and

18 (d) May develop program policies and system options that will lead  
19 the program to become self-sustaining. This may include establishment  
20 of fees for participation, system fees for the administration of  
21 accounts, and set-up fees; and transactions fees for deposits and  
22 disbursements, career counseling fees, sponsorship fees, and other fees  
23 as determined appropriate by the board.

24 (2) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this  
25 section.

26 (a) "Approved career development plan" means an employee's career  
27 development plan that is approved by the program managers and contains  
28 the necessary information to determine if expenditures are in alignment  
29 with program criteria.

30 (b) "Approved education and training" means education, training,  
31 and associated costs aligned with an approved career development plan  
32 and thus eligible to be funded from a lifelong learning account.

33 (c) "Financial institution" means any federally chartered or state  
34 chartered bank, savings bank, or savings and loan association, or  
35 credit union.

36 (d) "Lifelong learning accounts" means joint savings accounts that  
37 are established by employees and employers to support the education and

1 training of employees and that are aligned with their approved career  
2 development plan.

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