

SENATE BILL REPORT

SCR 8409

As of January 16, 2014

Brief Description: Approving the workforce training and education coordinating board's high skills high wages plan.

Sponsors: Senators Bailey, Kohl-Welles, Chase, Rivers, Frockt, Parlette, Cleveland, Dammeier, McAuliffe, Keiser, Tom, Conway and Mullet; by request of Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 1/16/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: Eric Wolf (786-7405)

Background: The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Board) was created in 1991 to provide planning, coordination, evaluation, monitoring, and policy analysis for the state workforce training system as a whole, and to advise the Governor and the Legislature concerning the training system.

The Board must develop and maintain a ten-year state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education. The plan must establish goals, objectives, and priorities for the state training system.

Every four years, the Board must provide the Legislature and the Governor with an update of the state comprehensive plan. The Legislature, after public hearings, must approve or recommend changes to the plan and the updates by way of a concurrent resolution. Once approved, the plan becomes the state's workforce training policy unless legislation is enacted to alter the policies set forth in the plan.

The most recently updated plan, called High Skills, High Wages 2012-2022, includes the following goals and objectives:

- improving career and education guidance for students;
- increasing workplace and life skills development;
- expanding programs of study for career-focused courses;
- increasing workplace experiences;
- addressing student retention;

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- prioritizing job search and placement for people in first careers;
- increasing employer engagement with the system by improving outreach;
- promoting economic development and encouraging investing in strategic economic opportunities;
- expanding learning opportunities for workers at all stages of the education and career paths;
- improving the quality and speed of job matching and referrals;
- strengthening performance accountability by focusing on employment and earnings outcomes; and
- reducing barriers to sharing or splitting funding and establishing cost-sharing practices.

Summary of Bill: The House of Representatives and the Senate, by way of concurrent resolution, approve the state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The plan emphasizes the importance of collaboration among the higher education sector to meet today's demands for a globally competitive workforce. The High Skills, High Wages plan helps the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges develop their own goals regarding workforce development. The plan is also directly aligned with the Washington Student Achievement Council's Roadmap. The High Skills, High Wages plan is the state's guide on workforce development for the next ten years and was developed with extensive input from higher education, business, and labor stakeholders. The private sector controls the content of the plan because they hold the majority of the seats on the Workforce Board, and the plan has been approved by all of the private sector stakeholders. One of the key components of the plan is to eliminate incidental barriers between agencies that impede employers from getting the most they can out of the workforce development system. The plan is clear that workforce development begins in middle and high school and continues throughout a person's life. Problems with the workforce development system require more than one agency to solve, and the plan helps coordinate the effort.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Alison Grazzini Smith, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Dr. Gene Sharratt, WA Student Achievement Council; Tim Probst, Employment Security Dept.; Cindy Zehnder, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Sheri Nelson, Assn. of WA Business; Lori Province, WA State Labor Council.