
Postsecondary Education & Workforce Committee

HB 2155

Brief Description: Creating the Washington credential registry.

Sponsors: Representatives Reeves, Slatter, Reed and Ormsby.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates the Washington Credential Registry (Registry) to provide online users information about educational and occupational credentials.

Hearing Date: 1/17/24

Staff: Saranda Ross (786-7068).

Background:

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) created and manages Washington Career Bridge (Career Bridge), a website that features over 6,500 Washington education programs such as short-term training to one-year certificates, apprenticeships, two-year associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees. Career Bridge shows the cost, length, program description, and contact person for each program. Additional data includes how many students completed a program, whether students secured employment, how much employees earn, and what industry students chose to work in. Career Bridge also details what employment sectors are growing, salaries in employment sectors, and forecasted openings.

The Workforce Board also created the Credential Transparency Advisory Committee (Committee) to explore the role that credentialing plays in the educational and economic mobility of Washingtonians, and talent development for the state's businesses. The Committee consisted of representatives from Washington's public and private higher education institutions,

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registered apprenticeships, kindergarten through grade 12 education, the workforce development system, and policymakers. In 2021 the Committee disbanded after issuing a final report that included recommendations to advance Washington's efforts toward a credential transparency framework that, among other features, is learner-centered, can be reliably evaluated, and provides momentum, mobility, and permeability along education and career pathways.

Credential Engine is a non-profit that maps credentials across the nation. Credential Engine created the Credential Transparency Description Language (CTDL), which establishes a common language for describing credentials.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Credential Registry (Registry) is created for the purpose of providing users, such as students, workers, employers, and educators, an online registry to understand, evaluate, and access essential information about educational and occupational credentials, such as diplomas, certificates, digital badges, certifications, licenses, apprenticeships, military training, and degrees. The Registry must be developed based on the data within Career Bridge and to the extent possible, may not duplicate data collection and aggregation. The Registry must be publicly available, searchable, and comparable using open specifications and linked, interoperable data formats. These formats must be aligned with widely recognized and adopted standards and must allow for open access across state and national borders, sectors, and platforms. This information must be human-readable, machine-actionable, current, accurate, and maintained on each provider's website and on an open national repository accessible to the public. Such requirements may be met through utilization of the Credential Transparency Description Language specifications. The Registry may not contain information about individual credential holders.

The Workforce Board develops and administers the Registry in consultation with agencies that oversee and certify credentials to workers and students, such as the Washington Student Achievement Council, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Department of Licensing, the Department of Health, and the Professional Educator Standards Board. The Workforce Board must work with state credential oversight agencies to establish a technical assistance team and set of resources to support credential providers and owners in publishing data to the Registry.

The Registry must include, at a minimum, information about:

- occupational and educational credentials, such as diplomas, certificates, digital badges, certifications, licenses, apprenticeships, military training, and degrees;
- providers and owners, if proprietary, of credentials;
- competencies associated with and required for credentials, such as knowledge, skills, abilities, related experiences, and mastery levels;
- programs, courses, learning content, and assessments associated with and required for credentials, including requirements for entry;
- costs of instruction, length of training, physical location, and online availability;

- process-based and outcome-based quality and performance information, including employment and earnings outcomes for credential holders that can be measured against accepted standards;
- educational and career pathways that show how credentials can be stacked and transferred;
- the recommended, recognized, and accepted transfer value of credentials from one provider and sector to another, including the transfer value of credentials earned in the military to civilian education and occupational opportunities; and
- links to specific occupational and job skills.

The Registry must be operational by July 1, 2025. The Workforce Board must annually report to the Legislature its progress on the implementation of the Registry, as well as its value and uses for residents and employers.

Subject to appropriations, grant funding is provided to support credential pathway transparency on the following initial topics:

- equitable pathways from secondary to postsecondary education, training, and employment, including populations that have demonstrated evidence of being underemployed, undereducated, or underpaid;
- education, training, and upskilling pathways for workers in the child care, early childhood, and prekindergarten sectors;
- pathways for corrections-involved individuals to maximize the likelihood of successful skills and credential attainment and stable, family-supporting employment with opportunities for advancement;
- successful transitions for individuals in the military, military spouses, and veterans;
- creating and piloting skill and competency validation protocols to ensure that learning is recognized and valued regardless of where or how learning occurs; and
- integration of data from the Registry into users' digital and portable learning and employment records.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 10, 2024.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.