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**SENATE BILL 5567**

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**State of Washington 69th Legislature 2025 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Nobles, Slatter, Chapman, Warnick, Conway, Liias, Lovelett, Ramos, Shewmake, Torres, Valdez, Wagoner, and C. Wilson

AN ACT Relating to secondary training for careers in natural resources and conservation; and adding new sections to chapter 28A.700 RCW.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that natural resource and conservation jobs are a critical component to Washington state's climate resilience and to rural economic vitality.

(2) The legislature further finds that young people ages 14 to 17 have limited equitable pathways into natural resource and conservation fields. Most job opportunities for youth require them to choose between gaining high school graduation credit, skill building, or a paid position.

(3) The legislature further finds that a connection to nature is strongly linked to positive mental and physical health outcomes. The youth in sustainable natural resource systems, or YESS programs, is an example of modern education for all children. This approach to education meets the learning needs of historically marginalized youth. Historic investments have been made in the health arena to address mental health problems, and this program increases protective factors for youth experiencing adverse childhood experiences.

(4) The legislature further finds that many students in Washington are not aware of the opportunities for family wage careers in the natural resource and conservation sectors.

(5) The legislature further finds that, as defined in the governor's office report "education for a green economy," the state needs to advocate for critical-demand jobs in addition to high-demand jobs.

(6) It is the intent of the legislature to fund a career preparation program designed to continue and expand the operations of an existing program that engages youth in sustainable natural resource systems.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall select a private sector, nonprofit partner to continue and expand the operations of an existing program designed to engage youth in sustainable natural resource systems, consistent with section 3 of this act.

(2) The private sector, nonprofit partner selected to implement the program must satisfy the following criteria:

(a) Be registered under section 501(c)(3) of the internal revenue code and have 20 years or more experience working with the education and natural resource sectors in Washington;

(b) Demonstrate the successful past completion of programs consistent with section 3 of this act, focusing on either restoration ecology or forest management, at a minimum of seven school districts;

(c) Have successfully completed natural resource grants as a program builder for career connect Washington under chapter 28C.30 RCW, and be partnering with the career connect Washington sector lead for agriculture and natural resources;

(d) Have successfully submitted career and technical education frameworks to the superintendent of public instruction for review under RCW 28A.700.010;

(e) Be prepared to regularly conduct surveys of natural resource and conservation employers, by sector, to identify workforce needs and career connected learning opportunities;

(f) Be able to work with the office of the superintendent of public instruction to collect data on program completion rates, graduation rates, and postsecondary outcomes;

(g) Demonstrate the ability to enhance the state's investment in the program with a private sector contribution, which may include: Funds, equipment, facilities, faculty, and scholarship or offers of employment for students after the completion of the program;

(h) Demonstrate successful recruitment of historically marginalized students and a plan to prioritize schools and districts designated as a "disadvantaged community" by the environmental protection agency's climate justice program or school districts located in communities scoring a seven or higher on the Washington environmental health disparities map under RCW 43.70.815;

(i) Be able to administer and submit cost proposals for this program, including: Coordination of courses, an employer survey, a professional learning component for teachers, equipment, and student stipends;

(j) Demonstrate the ability to expand the program, with adequate funding and a focus on a career and technical framework that meet the requirements of RCW 28A.700.030, to address topics that contribute to the conservation of natural resources in Washington including, but not limited to: Aquaculture and fisheries, education through outdoor learning, renewable energy, restoration ecology, forest management, urban and community forestry, green stormwater infrastructure, forest fire management, and water resource management; and

(k) Coordinate gear libraries with program partners.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The courses offered through the program administered by the private sector, nonprofit partner selected in section 2 of this act must satisfy the following criteria:

(a) Target students 14 through 17 years of age; and

(b) Use learning based on state standards, including the John McCoy (lulilaš) since time immemorial curriculum as outlined in RCW 28A.320.170, environmental and sustainability content outlined in RCW 28A.300.444, and natural resource industry competencies.

(2) The program structure must be designed as a summer skills center or after-school workforce program of no less than 90 hours, with no less than two-thirds of the program hours dedicated to completing work-integrated learning with designated community partners, that earns participants:

(a) High school credits;

(b) The possibility of credits with a community and technical college if the student satisfies the partnering college's dual credit requirements; or

(c) An industry-recognized credential or document of competency aligned to local employer needs.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) By December after the first and third year of state-funded programming, and in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall submit a report to the legislature on the program described in this chapter.

(2) The report must:

(a) Evaluate and summarize the activities of the program, including the school districts and skill centers involved each school year;

(b) Account for the use of all funding; and

(c) Provide recommendations for program continuation, expiration, or revision.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  Sections 1 through 4 of this act are each added to chapter 28A.700 RCW and codified with the subchapter heading of "secondary training for careers in natural resources and conservation."

**--- END ---**