

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## E2SHB 2630

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As of March 17, 2010

**Title:** An act relating to creating the opportunity express program.

**Brief Description:** Creating the opportunity express program.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Education Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Probst, Kenney, Conway, Maxwell, Jacks, White, Simpson, Seaquist, Sells, Goodman, Ormsby and Santos).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/28/10, 92-2; 3/16/10, 90-3.

**Committee Activity:** Ways & Means: 3/17/10.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Staff:** Tim Yowell (786-7435)

**Background:** The Worker Retraining Program (WRP) provides training, financial aid, and related support services for dislocated and unemployed workers. To qualify, a person must be eligible for or have exhausted unemployment benefits within the last 24 months. The program is presently budgeted to serve 6,200 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, but actual enrollment is expected to total approximately 13,000 FTEs this year. The 2010 supplemental operating budget as passed by the Senate provides \$27.8 million of increased state funding to purchase 6,000 additional WRP enrollment slots in fiscal year 2011. The 2010 supplemental operating budget as passed by the House provides \$1.0 million of increased state funding to purchase 425 additional WRP enrollment slots.

The Opportunity Grant program provides one year of financial aid and related support services for low-income students who are pursuing training in a high-demand field at a community or technical college or a private career college. The program is presently funded at \$11.5 million per year, and enrolls approximately 3,300 FTE students per year.

The Opportunity Internship program was established in 2009 to provide financial assistance for local consortia to help low-income high school students pursue careers in high-demand occupations. The consortia, which operate under the auspices of the area Workforce Development Councils, are to provide outreach, paid or unpaid internships, mentoring, and guidance. Opportunity Interns are also eligible for one year of state need grant assistance,

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regardless of financial need. Opportunity internships are presently limited to 10 consortia and 1,000 students per year.

**Summary of Bill:** The Opportunity Express Account is created. This is an appropriated account, without a designated revenue source, that may only be used for the WRP, other designated training programs, Opportunity Grants, and Opportunity Internships.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) is to give priority for enrollment in the WRP to applicants who are pursuing careers in aerospace, health care, long-term care, advanced manufacturing, construction, renewable energy, and occupations in designated strategic industry clusters.

The SBCTC may within available funds create a website to advertise the WRP, other training programs, Opportunity Internships, and Opportunity Grants.

During fiscal years 2011, 2012, and 2013, 12 consortia and 5,000 students may participate in Opportunity Internships each year.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill will help unemployed people move into the high-demand jobs of the future by publicizing the availability of training programs and financial assistance. It provides an account into which state or federal funds for worker training could be deposited and from which they could be appropriated.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Probst, prime sponsor; Sam Shaddox, Washington Student Association (WSA); Steve Lindstrom, WSA, NW Career College Federation.