

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5285

As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

Title: An act relating to conducting a workforce study of employment opportunities in the agriculture, environment, outdoor recreation, and natural resources economic sectors intended to provide educators with the information needed for informing students about employment opportunities in the studied fields.

Brief Description: Conducting a workforce study of employment opportunities in the agriculture, environment, outdoor recreation, and natural resources economic sectors intended to provide educators with the information needed for informing students about employment opportunities in the studied fields.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Wilson and Palumbo).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 3/15/17, 3/22/17 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill (As Amended by Committee)

- Requires the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to conduct a workforce assessment to determine projected employment and hiring demands for skilled mid-level workers in the agriculture, natural resources, outdoor recreation, and environment sectors.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Orwall, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

Staff: Trudes Tango (786-7384).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC) is required to develop a comprehensive and ongoing assessment process to analyze the need for additional degrees and programs. As part of the needs assessment, the WSAC examines projections of student, employer, and community demand for education and degrees on a regional and statewide basis. The WSAC collaborates with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (State Board) and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTB) in producing an assessment report every two years.

The WTB provides planning, coordination, evaluation, monitoring, and policy analysis for the state training system and provides advice to the Governor and the Legislature concerning the state training system.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the specific purpose, the WTB must conduct a workforce assessment for the agriculture, natural resources, outdoor recreation, and environment sectors. The purpose of the study is to assess the available data on current and projected employment and hiring demands for skilled mid-level workers in these sectors. The information is being collected to give educators better information as they develop programs for informing students about potential careers. The WTB may contract with a third party to conduct all or part of the study.

The study must, at a minimum, include an assessment of data from the Employment Security Department, the Workforce Development Councils, and the United States Census Bureau. The study must use a broad definition for skilled mid-level occupations. The study must identify five regions of the state based on the specific workforce characteristics of agriculture, natural resources, outdoor recreation, and environment employers. A sample of major employers from the sectors in each region must be identified and interviewed to assess employers' perspectives and expectations on employment in their industry.

The WTB must convene and consult with a steering committee to define the scope of skilled mid-level occupations considered, validate designation of specific regions to be analyzed, and assist in the design of information collection. The steering committee must include representatives of statewide business organizations and a delegate of the State Board.

The WTB must submit a report to the Legislature by October 15, 2018. The report must include:

- recommendations on current sources that provide the most representative and useful information for educators and counselors;
- steps to improve the specificity, timeliness, and quality of information available on skilled workforce needs; and
- steps necessary to extend the work into entry level and advanced level occupations and to identify specific skills that are key to enabling workers to be productive in these sectors.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:

The amended bill requires the study to include interviews with a sample of major employers in the sectors, rather than a representative sample of employers.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on March 23, 2017.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Washington's agricultural industry creates hundreds of jobs. There needs to be a way to find out what those jobs are and let educators know about those jobs so they can better prepare their students. Outdoor recreation is also a sector that produces jobs. This bill will help find out about all of the opportunities in the state.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The WTB is available for questions.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Wilson, prime sponsor; and Kathryn Kurtz, Pacific Education Institute.

(Other) Dave Pavelchek, Workforce and Training Board.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.