

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHCR 4404

As Passed Legislature

Brief Description: Approving the 2004 update to the state comprehensive plan for work force training.

Sponsors: By Representatives Kenney, Cox, Sells, Priest, Jarrett, Conway, Ormsby and Linville; by request of Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 2/15/05, 2/18/05 [DP];

Commerce & Labor: 2/28/05, 3/1/05 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/10/05, Adopted.

Passed Senate: 4/20/05, 45-2.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Approves the 2004 update to the state comprehensive plan for workforce training by the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board), which includes six strategic opportunities to improve the state's workforce training and education system.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Kenney, Chair; Sells, Vice Chair; Cox, Ranking Minority Member; Rodne, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buri, Dunn, Fromhold, Hasegawa, Jarrett, Ormsby, Priest, Roberts and Sommers.

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Conway, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Condotta, Ranking Minority Member; Sump, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Crouse, Hudgins and McCoy.

Staff: Christopher Abbott (786-7119).

Background:

The Workforce Board was created in 1991 to do strategic planning and evaluation of the various components of the state's workforce training system and to advocate for meeting the education and training needs of employers and workers. The Workforce Board focuses on training and jobs that require less than a baccalaureate degree.

One of the Workforce Board's responsibilities is to develop a state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education. The plan is developed based on economic, labor market, and population trends; industry and occupational forecasts; evaluations of training programs; and needs of employers, program participants, and workers. Each of the agencies on the Workforce Board is expected to create operating plans for their workforce development efforts that are consistent with the comprehensive plan. These include the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, and the Employment Security Department.

The Workforce Board is required to update the comprehensive plan every two years and submit it to the Governor and the Legislature. After public hearings, the Legislature is to approve the plan through concurrent resolution or recommend changes. The Workforce Board's 2004 plan, "High Skills, High Wages 2004," was submitted in October 2004.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

The state faces challenges in the workforce to close the gap in supply and demand for skilled workers; enable workers to fully benefit from a changing economy; and assist disadvantaged youth, persons with disabilities, recent immigrants, and low-wage workers in moving up the job ladder.

The state comprehensive plan for workforce training and education prepared by the Workforce Board establishes six strategic opportunities:

1. increasing postsecondary education and training capacity at the sub-baccalaureate level and targeting resources to expand capacity in high demand programs while ensuring that individuals have access to a broad range of opportunities;
2. reducing dropouts, increasing vocational pathways, and holding schools accountable for retaining students through graduation;
3. expanding and sustaining industry skill panels using partnerships of employers, educators and labor to foster innovative workforce training;
4. increasing training linked to retention support for low-income individuals;
5. increasing basic skills and English as a second language instruction that is integrated with occupational skills training; and
6. expanding customized training for incumbent workers.

The Workforce Board used an inclusive process to develop consensus on the priorities identified in the plan, and secured the unanimous endorsement of critical constituencies.

Therefore, the House of Representatives and the Senate approve the 2004 update to the state comprehensive plan for workforce training.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: (Higher Education) The workforce training system is large and complex. In developing the comprehensive plan, the Workforce Board received input from a wide range of stakeholders. This is an important plan because it is the result of collaboration among business, labor, and the education system. The system's customers shape what the needs are. This good work should be recognized by the Legislature through the passage of the supporting resolution. Community and technical colleges are particularly aware of the skills gap identified in the comprehensive plan and the need to prepare low-skill individuals for the labor force. Workforce development councils use the plan to help regional areas focus on developing their unique workforce needs. Local skills panels are an important strategy for bringing employers, labor groups, and the education and training providers to the table to address local employment needs. The plan has integral parts connected to the K-12 education system. Career guidance and dropout retention are important strategies for all students. Skills centers and the K-12 system are the pipeline into the future workforce.

Testimony For: (Commerce & Labor) Workforce training is a vital aspect of higher education, and this resolution endorses the work the Board has done in this respect. The Board has solicited input from over 3,000 people and brought business and labor together. As a result of the Board's work, innovative programs like skill panels have achieved national recognition and success in coordinating training programs with employer needs. The Board should focus on improving enrollment in high school career guidance and vocational education programs and attracting qualified teachers, expanding customized training programs, and helping individuals overcome barriers (low income, English-as-a-second-language, disabilities) to obtaining high wage jobs.

Testimony Against: (Higher Education) None.

Testimony Against: (Commerce & Labor) None.

Persons Testifying: (Higher Education) Representative Kenney, prime sponsor; Ellen O'Brien Saunders, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Randy Loomans, Washington State Labor Council; Mike Hudson, Association of Washington Business; Dave Cunningham, Lake Washington Technical College; Ron Wheadon, Green River Community College; John Loyle, Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council; John Aultman, New Market Skills Center; and John Vicklund, Washington Manufacturing Services.

Persons Testifying: (Commerce & Labor) Representative Kenney, prime sponsor; Ellen O'Brien Saunders, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Randy Loomans,

Washington State Labor Council; Mike Hudson, Association of Washington Business; Tim Stensager, Franklin Pierce School District; John Loyle, Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council; Asbury Lockett, Washington Manufacturing Services; and Paula Norby, Tacoma Community College.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Higher Education) None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: (Commerce & Labor) None.