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HOUSE BILL 2177

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State of Washington                      65th Legislature                      2017 Regular Session

By Representatives Chapman, Steele, Frame, and Tharinger

Read first time 03/22/17. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1            AN ACT Relating to creating the rural county high employer demand  
2 jobs program; adding a new section to chapter 28B.50 RCW; and  
3 creating a new section.

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

5            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that:

6            (a) According to research from Georgetown University, by the year  
7 2020, seventy percent of jobs in Washington state will require at  
8 least some education and training beyond high school, which aligns  
9 with Washington's educational attainment goals established under RCW  
10 28B.77.020; and

11            (b) Research by the state board for community and technical  
12 colleges and other entities has found that attending college for at  
13 least one year and earning a credential results in a substantial  
14 boost in earnings for adults who enter a community college with a  
15 high school diploma or less.

16            (2) In addition, the legislature finds that:

17            (a) Rural counties face unique challenges to achieving full  
18 economic and community development in the face of societal trends  
19 that concentrate job and population growth in larger metropolitan  
20 areas. For example, seventy-five percent of the job growth in  
21 Washington by 2018 is projected to be confined to just five large

1 counties while two-thirds of the state's recent population growth has  
2 occurred in the three largest counties, and seven counties have  
3 actually lost population in the past year.

4 (b) Opportunity, community vitality, quality of life, and  
5 prosperity are essential for all Washington communities.

6 (3) Therefore, the legislature, through this act, intends to help  
7 small towns and economically struggling rural communities create  
8 opportunities and jobs for young people and for unemployed residents  
9 so that they may obtain family wage employment in their local  
10 communities.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50  
12 RCW to read as follows:

13 (1) The definitions in this subsection apply throughout this  
14 section unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

15 (a) "Eligible county" means a county with a population of fewer  
16 than eighty thousand persons, based on population estimates reported  
17 on April 1, 2016, by the office of financial management, that, as of  
18 January 1, 2017:

19 (i) Had an unemployment rate of eight percent or higher, as  
20 reported by the employment security department's most recent monthly  
21 employment report, not seasonally adjusted; and

22 (ii) Had a median wage of less than eighteen dollars per hour, as  
23 determined by the employment security department's report on median  
24 hourly wages by county.

25 (b) "Gift aid" means financial aid received from the federal Pell  
26 grant, the state need grant program in chapter 28B.92 RCW, the  
27 college bound scholarship program in chapter 28B.118 RCW, the  
28 opportunity grant program in chapter 28B.50 RCW, the opportunity  
29 scholarship program in chapter 28B.145 RCW, or any other state grant,  
30 scholarship, or worker retraining program that provides funds for  
31 educational purposes with no obligation of repayment. Student loans  
32 and work study programs are not "gift aid."

33 (c) "High employer demand field" means a program of study or  
34 apprenticeship, identified by the college board or a community or  
35 technical college located in an eligible county, in which the number  
36 of students prepared for employment from local programs is inadequate  
37 to meet the demand for employees locally in that field.

38 (d) "Office" means the office of student financial assistance,  
39 established in chapter 28B.76 RCW.

1 (e) "Program" means the rural county high employer demand jobs  
2 program created in this section.

3 (2)(a) The rural county high employer demand jobs program is  
4 established to assist students in obtaining local jobs by earning  
5 certificates, associate degrees, or other industry-recognized  
6 credentials in high employer demand fields.

7 (b) The college board or the community or technical college  
8 located in an eligible county must identify high employer demand  
9 fields. The college board or the community or technical college may  
10 publicize those high employer demand fields as part of existing  
11 community outreach efforts.

12 (3) To be eligible for the program, a student must:

13 (a) Be a resident of an eligible county;

14 (b) Be enrolled in a high employer demand field that leads to a  
15 certificate, associate degree, or other industry-recognized  
16 credential at a community or technical college located in an eligible  
17 county;

18 (c) Have a family income that does not exceed seventy percent of  
19 the state median family income adjusted for family size, as  
20 determined by the office;

21 (d) Submit the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA)  
22 or the Washington application for state financial aid; and

23 (e) Within six months before initial receipt of the scholarship  
24 under this program, have received either:

25 (i) A diploma from a high school located in an eligible county or  
26 the equivalent of a high school diploma; or

27 (ii) Unemployment benefits under Title 50 RCW.

28 (4)(a) The program provides student tuition and required fees for  
29 up to forty-five credits or the equivalent of one year of full time  
30 study at a community or technical college located in an eligible  
31 county.

32 (b) To remain eligible for the program, the student must maintain  
33 a cumulative grade point average of 2.0.

34 (5)(a) The office must administer the program and may adopt rules  
35 necessary to administer the program.

36 (b) Subject to the availability of funding and the limits  
37 established in subsection (4) of this section, the office shall award  
38 scholarships to students who meet the criteria in subsection (3) of  
39 this section for an amount equal to the cost of tuition and required  
40 fees, less any gift aid received.

1           (c) The program shall not result in a reduction of any federal or  
2 state gift aid.

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