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**HOUSE BILL 1544**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2021 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Klippert, Steele, Dufault, J. Johnson, and Dent

AN ACT Relating to supporting effective agriculture, food, and natural resource education; amending RCW 28A.300.080 and 28A.300.090; and adding new sections to chapter 28A.300 RCW.

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

**Sec.**  RCW 28A.300.080 and 1983 1st ex.s. c 34 s 1 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The legislature recognizes that agriculture is the most basic and singularly important industry in the state, that agriculture is of central importance to the welfare and economic stability of the state, and that the maintenance of this vital industry requires a continued source of trained and qualified individuals who qualify for employment in agriculture ((~~and agribusiness~~)), food, and natural resource career pathways.

(2) The legislature finds that research shows that students enrolled in a career and technical education program in high school have a higher graduation rate than other students, and that the agricultural education branch of career and technical education fosters an understanding of the history and principles of agriculture, agriscience, manufacturing, agribusiness, leadership, advocacy, career-connected learning experiences, and community service.

(3) The legislature, therefore, intends to promote comprehensive and formal instruction in agricultural education, and membership in the corresponding career and technical student organizations, to provide students with the opportunity to:

(a) Develop fundamental leadership and communication skills;

(b) Develop an applied understanding of the agricultural industry and its potential;

(c) Explore and understand career opportunities through supervised experiences;

(d) Engage with industry mentors; and

(e) Plan for career and college success.

(4) In an effort to assist actions of schools to offer career and technical education courses, the legislature intends to support dropout prevention programs and career readiness, and improve learning opportunities and educational outcomes in agriculture, food, and natural resource education.

(5) The legislature declares that it is within the best interests of the people and state of Washington that a comprehensive ((~~vocational education program in agriculture~~)) career-connected learning opportunity through a career and technical education program in agriculture, food, and natural resource sciences be maintained in the state's secondary school system in order to ensure an adequate supply of trained and skilled individuals.

**Sec.**  RCW 28A.300.090 and 1983 1st ex.s. c 34 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) A ((~~vocational~~)) career-connected learning opportunity in the agriculture, food, and natural resource career cluster area shall be established as a career and technical education ((~~service area within~~)) program in the office of the superintendent of public instruction ((~~shall be established~~)). Adequate funding for the staffing of individuals trained or experienced in the field of ((~~vocational agriculture shall be provided for the vocational~~)) agriculture, food, and natural resource education ((~~service area for coordination of the state~~)) shall be provided for the program ((~~and to~~)).

(2) The program shall provide assistance to ((~~local~~)) school districts ((~~for the coordination of the~~)) and coordinate its activities ((~~of~~)) with applicable career and technical student ((~~agricultural~~)) organizations ((~~and associations~~)). The program staff members must include, but are not limited to, the supervisor of the agriculture, food, and natural resource education program employed by the office of the superintendent of public instruction and any additional staff member deemed appropriate.

((~~(2)~~)) (3) The ((~~vocational agriculture education service area~~)) program shall:

(a) Assess needs in ((~~vocational~~)) agriculture ((~~education~~)), food, and natural resource sciences, assist local school districts in establishing ((~~vocational~~)) agriculture, food, and natural resource education programs, review local school district applications for approval of ((~~vocational~~)) agriculture, food, and natural resource education programs, evaluate existing programs, and plan research and studies for the improvement of curriculum materials for specialty areas of ((~~vocational~~)) agriculture, food, and natural resource education. Standards and criteria developed under this subsection shall satisfy the mandates of federally-assisted ((~~vocational~~)) career and technical education;

(b) Develop in-service programs for teachers and administrators of ((~~vocational~~)) agriculture, food, and natural resource education, review applications for ((~~vocational~~)) career and technical education agriculture, food, and natural resource teacher certification, and assist in teacher recruitment and placement in ((~~vocational~~)) career and technical education agriculture, food, and natural resource programs;

(c) Serve as a liaison with the future farmers of America, representatives of business, industry, and appropriate public agencies, and institutions of higher education in order to disseminate information, promote improvement of ((~~vocational~~)) career and technical education agriculture, food, and natural resource programs, and assist in the development of adult and continuing education programs in ((~~vocational~~)) agriculture, food, and natural resource education; and

(d) Establish an advisory task force committee of agriculturists, who represent the diverse areas of the agricultural industry in Washington, which shall make annual recommendations including, but not limited to, the development of curriculum, staffing, strategies for the purpose of establishing a source of trained and qualified individuals in agriculture, and strategies for articulating the state program in ((~~vocational~~)) agriculture, food, and natural resource education, including youth leadership throughout the state school system.

(4) For the purposes of this section, "agriculture, food, and natural resource career cluster area" means a program of study requiring the student to:

(a) Complete courses in the following areas:

(i) Agribusiness systems;

(ii) Animal systems;

(iii) Biotechnology systems;

(iv) Environmental service systems;

(v) Food products and processing systems;

(vi) Natural resource systems;

(vii) Plant systems; and

(viii) Power, structural, and technical systems;

(b) Develop an extended learning program that is supervised by their agriculture, food, and natural resource educator; and

(c) Be engaged in a career and technical student organization.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.300 RCW to read as follows:

The legislature finds that career and technical student organizations prepare students to enter a postsecondary education institute and a career. The legislature finds also that barriers for agriculture, food, and natural resource students should be removed.

Therefore, to help local school districts meet performance targets established in RCW 28A.700.040, to provide assistance to students of agriculture, food, and natural resource education programs at schools that qualify as rural and low-income schools under the federal every student succeeds act, P.L. 114-95, and to provide assistance consistent with the requirements the federal every student succeeds act, the office of the superintendent of public instruction shall provide every student enrolled in an approved agriculture, food, and natural resource education course, based on annual June 1st enrollment, with membership to the corresponding career and technical student organizations.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.300 RCW to read as follows:

The superintendent of public instruction, in consultation with the board of directors of the Washington FFA association, shall adopt and periodically revise rules to implement RCW 28A.300.090 and section 3 of this act.

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