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**SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2019**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** House College & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Representatives Boehnke, Graham, J. Johnson, Leavitt, and Sutherland)

AN ACT Relating to increasing educational and training opportunities for careers in retail; creating new sections; and providing an expiration date.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that the retail industry is vital to the state's economy, providing 42 percent of the state's total tax collections in 2019, employing approximately 385,000 people across the state, and paying nearly $24 billion in annual wages. Nationally, one in four jobs are in retail, 34 percent of the retail workforce consists of people of color, and the retail industry is the fourth largest employer of immigrants.

(2) Workers with retail experience acquire transferrable and stackable job skills needed in all industries and careers. Retail work offers foundational training for strong customer service skills, which is the single most essential skill employers are looking for in new hires, according to research from the Washington employment security department. Sixty-two percent of retail store managers earned promotions through training programs that enabled them to move up the ranks of the retail industry. The legislature finds that the majority of retail employers in Washington are small businesses who would benefit greatly from a pipeline of entry-level employees with job readiness skills. A few other states have successfully adopted entry-level retail customer service, retail operations, and warehouse logistics courses, such as the national retail foundation's retail industry skills and education certification program.

(3) The legislature further finds that Washington has developed strong career and technical education programs and has invested in career connected learning. The career connected learning cross-agency work group is charged with creating work-based and academic programs for young people to explore, learn, and earn money and college-level credit. However, the current career and technical education clusters and career connected learning programs do not adequately identify and promote working in retail as a career. Although some career clusters and pathways may include courses that are relevant to a career in retail, there are not pathways specific to retail nor are students encouraged to participate for the purpose of a career in retail. Additionally, the legislature recognizes that there is a positive correlation between educational opportunities available to incarcerated individuals and reduced recidivism, especially when incarcerated individuals participate in education and training programs focused on job opportunities that are available upon release.

(4) It is the legislature's intent to help employees be successful in retail and to provide a skilled workforce for retail employers by increasing and clearly identifying education and training opportunities for careers in the retail industry.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The workforce training and education coordinating board, in consultation with the state board for community and technical colleges and statewide retail employer organizations, shall:

(a) Identify core skills needed for employment in the retail industry;

(b) Identify existing courses, educational pathways, and apprenticeships for students and entry-level job seekers to gain the core skills identified;

(c) Map educational pathways, including apprenticeship programs, that retail workers may use to pursue promotions and job advancement opportunities;

(d) Identify where there are gaps in educational courses, trainings, and apprenticeships for retail workers; and

(e) Identify in demand, higher wage, nonindustry specific professions within the retail industry that experience and education in retail may lead to, such as professions in accounting, human resources, or information technology.

(2) The workforce training and education coordinating board shall use the information gathered from subsection (1) of this section to engage stakeholders, including the state board for community and technical colleges, the office of the superintendent of public instruction, the department of corrections, the employment security department, the career connected learning cross-agency work group under chapter 28C.30 RCW, and statewide retail employer organizations to make recommendations to the legislature on the following:

(a) Strategies to develop additional courses, pathways, and apprenticeships to make retail certifications and credentials available for job seekers and current retail employees;

(b) Strategies to build a network for students and job seekers who complete retail certification courses to connect with potential employers;

(c) Options for engaging and partnering with retail employers to provide courses to incumbent frontline workers for the purpose of upskilling and promotions, including for in demand, higher paid, nonindustry specific positions within the retail industry; and

(d) Options for increasing training and job opportunities in the retail industry for underserved communities and previously incarcerated individuals.

(3) The workforce training and education coordinating board shall report on the progress of this section to the appropriate committees of the legislature in accordance with RCW 43.01.036 by December 1, 2022, and submit a final report with recommendations by December 1, 2023.

(4) This section expires July 1, 2024.

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