

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6296

As of January 26, 2024

Title: An act relating to establishing a retail industry work group.

Brief Description: Establishing a retail industry work group.

Sponsors: Senators Boehnke and Dozier.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/26/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to establish a retail workforce workgroup to identify, among other things, programs of value to the retail workforce and possible career pathways.
- Directs the workgroup to recommend up to four colleges to pilot short-term or micro-credentials in support of the retail workforce.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: Washington Retail Workforce Report. A 2023 report on the Washington retail workforce found the industry has a turnover rate in excess of 60 percent. Among other things, the report recommends improving career advancement opportunities with stacking of credentials toward academic degrees as one potential solution.

Microcredentials. Microcredentials are short, focused credentials designed to provide in-demand skills, know-how and experience and may include competency-based skill recognition. Stackable microcredentials may provide a pathway to a certificate or full

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degree, now or when you are ready.

Summary of Bill: The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges must establish a retail workgroup consisting of higher education, business, labor, and workforce development representatives with expertise in the retail industry. The workgroup must report on the following to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by October 1, 2025:

- educational programs of value to the retail workforce;
- gaps in education opportunities and skill development within existing academic programs;
- best practices in program design for high quality credentials in support of the retail sector;
- career pathways and stackable credentials for individuals in the retail sector; and
- barriers individual face in attaining high quality credentials in support of a retail career.

The workgroup must recommend up to four colleges to pilot programs for short-term credentials and microcredentials in support of the retail workforce.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 2024.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is a great opportunity to continue the work we are doing in the community colleges to create career pathways. This focuses on the retail industry to make sure we can work with the stakeholders and collaborate to create more opportunities for the workforce. This makes sure the relevant people are at the table to make decisions about what is coming next for the retail industry. Technology drives training needs. New educational opportunities can help reduce turnover. This bill is about opportunities to create value for employees. A new study that's being released in mid-February will show that students who received short term certificates stay at their current employers for five years longer. They receive twice as many promotions and they receive 33 percent higher wages. 51 percent of certificate graduates continue onto higher education. Without the short term certificate program to get one of my students feet wet in higher education, he would not have attained his bachelor's degree. Many may not think of college after high school. This bill will help get more promotions and higher pay through accessible retail credentials. There are many professional and technical programs with a nexus to retail. We agree that it will be helpful to look at how these programs can be revised or align with the needs of the retail workforce. We like the short-term pilots as a thoughtful way to get to the next phase of recommendations from the 2023 retail report.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Matt Boehnke, Prime Sponsor; Rose GUNDERSEN, Washington Retail Association; Carolyn McKinnon, SBCTC; Ryan Reygers.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.