
SENATE BILL 5285

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Senators Wilson and Palumbo

Read first time 01/19/17. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to conducting a workforce study of employment
2 opportunities in the agriculture, environment, and natural resources
3 economic sectors intended to provide educators with the information
4 needed for informing students about employment opportunities in the
5 studied fields; creating new sections; and providing an expiration
6 date.

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

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that the
9 agriculture, environment, and natural resources economic sectors can
10 offer rewarding career paths for students who are interested in the
11 natural world and are excited by the idea of having a career with
12 outdoor opportunities. Not only are these careers currently available
13 to students, but the United States department of agriculture
14 predicts, in their recent report on employment opportunities for
15 college graduates in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources,
16 and the environment, that employment opportunities in these fields
17 are expected to increase.

18 (2) The legislature further finds that thousands of Washington
19 students do not have access to the types of education that are
20 necessary to guide them down the pathways leading to marketable job
21 skills and productive careers in the agriculture, environment, and

1 natural resources economic sectors. Long-term career success in these
2 fields require the ability to identify, apply, and integrate concepts
3 from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as they
4 specifically relate to the agriculture, environment, and natural
5 resources economic sectors and the sectors' related careers.

6 (3) The legislature further finds that students will have the
7 information they need to consider careers in the agriculture,
8 environment, and natural resources economic sectors if educators are
9 provided with actual applications of how to put integrated learning
10 into action and facilitating experiences that allow students to get
11 outdoors and learn in real-world and community-connected
12 environments.

13 (4) The legislature further finds that the economic opportunities
14 available for students interested in agriculture, natural resources,
15 or the environment can be more readily unlocked if educators are
16 provided with information on worker demand and qualifications so that
17 they are equipped to assist students to access the economic
18 opportunity and help make connections between education and outdoor
19 careers. The information needed by educators to make these
20 connections can be accomplished through a statewide workforce study
21 of potential jobs in these fields.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1)(a) Subject to the availability of
23 amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, the workforce
24 training and education coordinating board shall conduct a workforce
25 assessment for the agriculture, natural resources, and environment
26 sectors. The purpose of the study is to assess the available data on
27 current and projected employment levels and hiring demand for skilled
28 mid-level workers in the agriculture, environment, and natural
29 resources economic sectors in the state. Ultimately, this information
30 is being collected so that educators have better information
31 available as they develop programs for informing students about
32 potential careers.

33 (b) The study must use a broad definition for the mid-level
34 skilled occupations included in the study and identify up to five
35 regions of the state based on the specific workforce characteristics
36 of agriculture, natural resources, and environment employers.

37 (2) The study required by this section must, at a minimum:

38 (a) Include assessment of:

1 (i) Data from the employment security department on the current
2 and projected levels of employment and net job vacancies;

3 (ii) Data used by workforce development councils in identifying
4 demand for workers in their areas;

5 (iii) Data from the United States census bureau; and

6 (iv) Data from the United States census bureau's longitudinal
7 employer-household dynamics dataset.

8 (b) Identify and interview a sample of major employers from the
9 agriculture, environment, and natural resources economic sectors in
10 each region to assess employers' perspective and expectations on
11 employment and hiring of skilled mid-level workers in their industry
12 and area.

13 (3) In conducting any study pursuant to this section, the
14 workforce training and education coordinating board must convene and
15 consult with a steering committee to define the scope of mid-level
16 skilled occupations considered, validate designation of specific
17 regions to be analyzed, and assist in the design of information
18 collection. The steering committee must include representatives of
19 statewide business organizations.

20 (4) In implementing this section, the workforce training and
21 education coordinating board may complete the work directly or, at
22 its discretion, contract the assignment, or portions of the
23 assignment, to a third party or parties chosen by the workforce
24 training and education coordinating board. However, the final
25 delivered product must be reported under the workforce training and
26 education coordinating board.

27 (5) The report must include recommendations on current sources
28 that provide the most representative and useful information for
29 educators and counselors, further steps to improve the specificity,
30 timeliness, and quality of information available on skilled workforce
31 needs and issues in the areas of the state, and steps necessary to
32 extend this work both into entry level and advanced level
33 occupations, and into identification of specific skills that are key
34 to enabling workers to be productive in this sector.

35 (6) Consistent with RCW 43.01.036, the study required by this
36 section must be completed and the results reported to the legislature
37 by October 15, 2018.

38 (7) This section expires June 30, 2019.

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