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**SENATE BILL 6289**

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**State of Washington 68th Legislature 2024 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Boehnke, Dozier, and L. Wilson

AN ACT Relating to establishing a work group to assess the restrictions on the employment of 16 and 17 year olds; and creating new sections.

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The legislature finds that the state, in partnership with employers and the public school system, has developed and invested in preparatory secondary career and technical education programs for high school students. These programs have been developed and expanded with the intent of providing high school students with hands-on work experience, coupled with education and training to work in various industries throughout our state. Many of these programs are designed to allow students to begin working in the field in conjunction with participating in training. Field work opportunities can bridge the gap between high school and entering the workforce, thereby helping students succeed following graduation. However, many employers are unable or unwilling to hire 16 and 17 year old students participating in these programs due to extensive laws and rules governing the employment of minors. This includes, for example, restrictions on when students can work and the job duties they are able to perform. Some of these state laws and rules go beyond what is required by federal law.

(2) Therefore, the legislature hereby directs the department of labor and industries to convene a work group to review existing laws, rules, and agency policies, and develop recommendations for changes to such laws, rules, and policies in order to enhance the employability of 16 and 17 year old students, with a particular focus on students who are participating in or who have completed a preparatory secondary career and technical education program and want to begin working, while also protecting their safety and welfare.

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  (1) The department of labor and industries must convene a work group for the purposes of assessing the current restrictions on the employment of 16 and 17 year old minors. The work group shall provide recommendations on any necessary policy changes to those restrictions in order to improve access to career development opportunities, particularly for minors participating in preparatory secondary career and technical education programs, while also maintaining appropriate protections for their safety and welfare.

(2) In developing recommendations required by this section, the work group shall assess the following:

(a) Process for obtaining minor work permits;

(b) Categories of prohibited work, focusing on those categories where minors can access related training through preparatory secondary career and technical education programs or other programs;

(c) Hours and scheduling restrictions, including the accessibility of the current variance process;

(d) Procedures for obtaining permission to work from local school districts;

(e) Wages; and

(f) Relevant insurance issues.

(3) To the extent practicable, the following entities, groups, and interests should be represented in the work group:

(a) Department of labor and industries;

(b) Office of the superintendent of public instruction;

(c) State board for community and technical colleges;

(d) Career connect Washington and the career connected learning cross-agency work group under RCW 28C.30.030;

(e) Workforce training and education coordinating board;

(f) Washington state skills center association;

(g) Representatives of interested business and employer associations and organizations;

(h) Representatives of interested labor organizations in relevant trades; and

(i) Representatives of other interested entities, groups, and interests identified by the department of labor and industries.

(4) The department of labor and industries may initiate changes to agency rules and practices based on recommendations of the work group prior to the issuance of the required reports and any related legislative action in order to appropriately expand access to career opportunities for 16 and 17 year old minors, provided that any such changes comply with federal and state law.

(5) The work group must submit to the appropriate committees of the legislature, in accordance with RCW 43.01.036, an initial report with recommendations by December 1, 2024, and a final report with recommendations by October 1, 2025. The recommendations may include proposals to modify state laws and department rules and practices. The reports shall also include a summary of any changes to department rules and practices initiated or completed as a result of the work group's findings and recommendations.

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