

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1821

As Reported by House Committee On:
Postsecondary Education & Workforce

Title: An act relating to creating a postsecondary credential transparency work group.

Brief Description: Creating a postsecondary credential transparency work group.

Sponsors: Representatives Slatter, Timmons and Pollet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Postsecondary Education & Workforce: 2/15/23, 2/17/23 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a credential transparency Work Group.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Reed, Vice Chair; Ybarra, Ranking Minority Member; Waters, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hansen, Jacobsen, Leavitt, Pollet, Schmidt and Timmons.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Chandler.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Klicker and McEntire.

Staff: Saranda Ross (786-7068)

Background:

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) created and

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manages Washington Career Bridge (Career Bridge), a website that features over 6,500 Washington education programs such as short-term training to one-year certificates, apprenticeships, two-year associate degrees, and bachelor's degrees. Career Bridge shows the cost, length, program description, and contact person for each program. Additional data includes how many students completed a program, whether students secured employment, how much students earn, and what industry students work in. Career Bridge also details what employment sectors are growing, salaries in employment sectors, and forecasted openings.

The Workforce Board also created the Credential Transparency Advisory Committee (Committee) to explore the role that credentialing plays in the educational and economic mobility of Washingtonians, and talent development for the state's businesses. The Committee consists of representatives from Washington's public and private higher education institutions, registered apprenticeship, kindergarten through grade 12 education, the workforce development system, and policymakers.

In 2021, the Committee issued a final report that includes recommendations to advance Washington's efforts toward a credential transparency framework that, among other features, is learner-centered, can be reliably evaluated, and provides momentum, mobility, and permeability along education and career pathways.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Work Group.

A credential transparency Work Group (Work Group) is created. The Work Group is staffed by, and housed within, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board). In addition to the Workforce Board itself, representatives from multiple governmental organizations and postsecondary education agencies and institutions are required to be a part of the Work Group.

The purpose of the Work Group is to:

- increase postsecondary credential transparency;
- identify and disseminate information on credentials;
- review existing state credential platforms, data, and projects; and
- identify best practices to increase credential transparency.

The duties of the Work Group include:

- providing recommendations to a state credential transparency platform;
- developing a shared definition of credential and common credential terminology;
- recommending needed changes to state credential platforms;
- developing a proposal to recognize learning that occurs through paid work and career-connected learning opportunities; and
- developing a statewide communications plan to increase credential awareness.

The Work Group is authorized to contract with a state credential transparency platform.

Demonstration Projects.

The Work Group is required to identify up to four workforce industry sectors that have statewide reach. The Workforce Board, in consultation with the Work Group, identify potential applicants for Demonstration Project funding by communicating with employer and worker associations within the chosen industry sectors. Each industry sector must select a lead organization and a network of partners to conduct Demonstration Projects on two statewide occupations within each respective industry sector. Each Demonstration Project must:

- identify diverse approaches to obtaining credentials across a range of providers within the chosen occupations;
- chart the skills, behaviors, abilities, and knowledge required for occupational pathways within the chosen occupations; and
- collect credential data within the chosen occupations, defined and determined by the Work Group using the common descriptive language.

The lead organization of each Demonstration Project must report to the Work Group the preliminary results of the data collected from the Demonstration Projects by October 1, 2024, and final results by October 1, 2025. The Work Group is required, to the extent possible, to incorporate the data from the demonstration projects into web-based tools and services to allow users to understand, evaluate, and make decisions about credentials and maximize their most equitable outcome. The Workforce Board, in consultation with the Work Group, must provide technical assistance to the Demonstration Projects to complete occupational skill analysis. The Work Group is also required to administer funds and other resources to support the Demonstration Projects and other directives in the bill.

The recommendations and developments created by the Work Group in conducting its duties and carrying out its purpose must be reported to the Legislature by November 30, 2024. Similarly, the findings and recommendations from the Demonstration Projects must be reported to the Legislature by November 30, 2025, and each year thereafter.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill removes the State Board of Education's Mastery-based Learning Initiative in kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) as an example of best practices to increase credential transparency and eliminates the requirement to develop K-12 credential recommendations to advance the Multiple Graduation Pathways Framework enacted in 2019. The substitute bill elaborates on how industry sectors will be chosen for Demonstration Projects and requires the credential transparency Work Group (Work Group) to provide technical assistance to the Demonstration Projects. The due date for Demonstration Projects to report data collection results to the Work Group and the due date for the Work Group to report to the Legislature are extended. The substitute bill details

purposes for use of funds, including supporting the Work Group and Demonstration Projects, and authorizes the Executive Director of the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) to add members to the Work Group. The substitute bill also adds the Workforce Board to the Work Group, instead of only staffing it as in the original bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 19, 2023.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) People with very different life and employment experiences seek credentials to improve their lives and achieve a living wage. Because people often go through seven to 11 different roles, careers, or jobs in their lives, recognizing how credentials are weighed and transferred is extremely important. This is especially so in cases where certain credits do not transfer at all. There are nearly one million unique credentials in the United States. In Washington, approximately 10,000 credentials are offered by state entities. It is hard to find reliable information about so many credentials and as a result, people lose out on employment. This bill does not include personal information about holders of credentials, it is only about the providers. This bill will formalize and solidify work that is already happening but needs more support. The credential transparency Work Group will be informed by fully engaged employers.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) There is a lot of support for this bill, but also concern because the costs of implementing it are not in the Governor's budget. This bill emerged very quickly and more time to develop it would be appreciated, especially in terms of adequately representing the community and technical colleges. Credential transparency is an issue that cuts across the entire state. The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board has been working on credentialing pathways for years. Many people are earning empty credentials, which are credentials with little to no weight or portability. This is an equity issue, as the same marginalized populations that have been historically excluded from the economy are also being negatively impacted by the current credentialing system. This is also an issue for employers, who cannot find workers that are skilled and ready to begin employment. Employers no longer have confidence in traditional credentials and some businesses are removing or reducing degree requirements. Credentials need to be translated into skills, and learning needs to be recognized and described in the same language so people do not have to start over if they are displaced, such as if technology takes over their job, or decide to

change careers. The only way to do this is to create a single taxonomy and understanding of how credentials act and relate to one another.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Vandana Slatter, prime sponsor; and Scott Cheney.

(Other) Eleni Papadakis, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; and Carolyn McKinnon, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.