

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5736

As of February 15, 2023

Title: An act relating to addressing high demand workforce shortages.

Brief Description: Addressing high demand workforce shortages.

Sponsors: Senators Nobles, Holy, Mullet, Hawkins, Randall, Nguyen, Lias, Boehnke, Conway, Hunt, Kuderer, Lovelett, Torres, Trudeau, Valdez and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 2/15/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Specifies that a portion of the funds in the Workforce Education Investment Account must only be used for higher education programs in advanced computing or a related field.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Staff: Alicia Kinne-Clawson (786-7407)

Background: Workforce Education Investment Account. The Workforce Education Investment Account (WEIA) was established in 2019 for higher education purposes. The WEIA is funded from two business and occupation (B&O) tax sources. First, 14.3 percent of the revenue collected from the 1.75 percent B&O tax rate on businesses earning more than \$1 million annually that conduct services and activities not classified elsewhere is deposited in WEIA. Second, the additional 1.22 percent surcharge on advanced computing businesses with a worldwide gross income in excess of \$25 billion is also deposited in WEIA. The WEIA may only be used for higher education programs, higher education operations, higher education compensation, and state-funded student aid programs.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: WEIA is modified to require that the greater amount of either all funds derived from the surcharge on advanced computing businesses or at least 15 percent of the account be used only for higher education programs that lead to a credential in advanced computer or a related field, to increase access and equity.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 9, 2023.

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 an opportunity to grow the workforce and focus on STEM careers. It will fill a gap to ensure we are training the next generation. Especially in overburdened and underrepresented communities. This one sentence bill will help address high demand workforce shortages by increasing high-tech graduates. It will ensure steady and predictable funding stream to support and build the programs for students to access and a pathway that leads to economic opportunity. Washington has over 16,000 unfilled computing jobs that make over 112k per year. The state is only graduating 2400 computer science majors annually and very few are students of color. Tapping into the high-tech sector is a barrier to these students. This allows all state, community, and technical colleges to offer four-year computer science degree. This will increase access and equity without any additional cost to the state.

CON: Computer science graduates are needed desperately in Washington State. Computer science programs are expensive, and students need additional support. This bill does not add any state cost because the workforce account is not an infinite pot of money. To implement this bill, some program will lose funding. A more transparent version of this bill would be required to identify which programs will lose funding in order to implement this bill. Which programs should be valued less than computer science? If more money needs to be allocated for computer science, it should be addressed through a budget request with new funding identified.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator T'wina Nobles, Prime Sponsor; Charles Knutson, Amazon; Albert Sardinias, WBBA / Tabor 100; Jayme Shoun, Washington STEM.

CON: Sue Nightingale, Washington Education Association.

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