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**HOUSE BILL 2360**

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**State of Washington**

**68th Legislature**

**2024 Regular Session**

**By** Representatives Slatter, Gregerson, Morgan, Leavitt, Berry, Davis, Nance, Reed, Ramel, Simmons, Paul, Ormsby, and Pollet

Read first time 01/15/24. Referred to Committee on Postsecondary Education & Workforce.

1 AN ACT Relating to creating the Washington digital empowerment  
2 and workforce inclusion act; adding new sections to chapter 28C.18  
3 RCW; and creating a new section.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that without basic  
6 digital literacy and technological confidence, Washingtonians cannot  
7 access information technology or information technology-enabled jobs,  
8 or the education and training programs to prepare them for those  
9 jobs. As job functions or components of functions are digitized,  
10 these individuals fall increasingly further behind economically and  
11 socially.

12 The legislature finds that recent technological advancements,  
13 such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud, and quantum  
14 computing have made the tools of digitization widely accessible and  
15 pervasive across all sectors with the ability to dramatically change  
16 the nature of work and the value of human capital in the marketplace.  
17 Workers must become adept at operating in an increasingly digitized  
18 world to perform at the highest levels of proficiency and  
19 productivity, and to influence and navigate employment and earnings  
20 potential.

1           Therefore, the legislature intends to establish the digital  
2 empowerment and workforce inclusion act to bring awareness to  
3 historically marginalized and underrepresented communities and to  
4 create opportunities to build confidence using technology, digital  
5 literacy education, and support for entry and professional growth in  
6 information technology-enabled careers.

7           NEW SECTION.       **Sec. 2.**     Subject to availability of amounts  
8 appropriated for this specific purpose, the Washington digital  
9 empowerment and workforce inclusion act is established to support  
10 historically marginalized people and communities in achieving  
11 meaningful and verifiable levels of digital literacy and to access  
12 and progress in information technology and information  
13 technology-enabled careers.

14          NEW SECTION.       **Sec. 3.**     (1) Subject to availability of amounts  
15 appropriated for this specific purpose, the digital empowerment and  
16 workforce inclusion office is created within the board. The digital  
17 empowerment and workforce inclusion office shall:

18           (a) Administer funds for the advance equity in information  
19 technology careers mentorship program established in section 6 of  
20 this act and the reentry and targeted community workforce development  
21 program established in section 7 of this act;

22           (b) Support partners and contractors;

23           (c) Develop and maintain a performance accountability dashboard  
24 to track the state's progress in closing the disparities in  
25 technology-based employment;

26           (d) Develop an interactive navigation portal for jobseekers,  
27 workers, and students. The portal must:

28           (i) Be easily and regularly updated by industry and educational  
29 organizations;

30           (ii) Provide actionable information on knowledge, skills, and  
31 abilities required for high-demand information technology and  
32 information technology-enabled jobs;

33           (iii) Make information on relevant education and training  
34 programs for information technology and information  
35 technology-enabled jobs available, including on-the-job training and  
36 apprenticeship programs; and

1 (iv) Explain how education and training programs and credentials  
2 on the portal can link or stack towards higher level credentials and  
3 employment.

4 (2) The board shall establish a digital empowerment and workforce  
5 inclusion workforce advisory committee for the purpose of:

6 (a) Advising the Washington State University global campus on the  
7 curriculum and assessments for the workplace digital literacy  
8 credential;

9 (b) Advising policymakers on the impact of digitization and  
10 technological advancements on the state's critical industry sectors,  
11 businesses, and current and future workers; and

12 (c) Providing recommendations for education and training  
13 investments and support services prioritizing marginalized and  
14 underrepresented people and communities, and workers being displaced  
15 or whose jobs are degraded by technology.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** Subject to availability of amounts  
17 appropriated for this specific purpose, the technology access devices  
18 for job seekers fund is created to provide access to devices, such as  
19 laptops, to job seekers to facilitate job training and employment  
20 access. In administering the fund, the board shall:

21 (1) Establish a transparent application process and system for  
22 establishing priorities and selection criteria for local workforce  
23 development boards to receive devices under the fund;

24 (2) Distribute devices and funds to purchase devices to local  
25 workforce development councils; and

26 (3) Monitor the rules, guidelines, and effectiveness of each  
27 local workforce development council in use of the devices.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** Subject to availability of amounts  
29 appropriated for this specific purpose, the Washington State  
30 University global campus shall create the Washington digital literacy  
31 credential program, which will culminate in the workplace digital  
32 literacy credential. The Washington State University global campus  
33 shall:

34 (1) Work with digital career equity act partners and other  
35 stakeholders, including community-based and tribal organizations,  
36 community and technical college adult basic programs, local workforce  
37 development boards, and public libraries to identify and assess  
38 existing digital literacy programs, curricula, assessments, and

1 credentials, and establish a free-access repository of information  
2 for any provider organization serving marginalized and  
3 underrepresented communities across the state;

4 (2) Provide evaluative information about the learning objectives,  
5 cultural appropriateness for targeted populations, accessibility,  
6 usefulness and portability of credentials, and cost;

7 (3) Identify and fill gaps in the curricula and available  
8 materials for digital literacy;

9 (4) Collaborate with institutions of higher education and  
10 industry organizations to gather recommendations on the development  
11 of the digital literacy credential program and the workplace digital  
12 literacy credential; and

13 (5) Build on its existing credential infrastructure to include a  
14 learner employer record or digital credential wallet that can be made  
15 available to program participants and credential holders.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Subject to availability of amounts  
17 appropriated for this specific purpose, the advance equity in  
18 information technology careers mentorship program is established. The  
19 board shall contract with a not-for-profit organization with a  
20 program connecting industry mentors to community and technical  
21 college computer science students to administer the program. The  
22 program shall serve up to 60 participants per year in small cohorts  
23 or individually. All participants must receive information technology  
24 industry navigational awareness and support. Information technology  
25 industry mentors must be prioritized to support historically  
26 marginalized and underrepresented participants. The program must  
27 include a research and evaluation component to help understand and  
28 develop supports for overcoming barriers to access for individuals  
29 historically marginalized and underrepresented in information  
30 technology careers, and the hiring parameters in companies that  
31 appear to exclude these individuals.

32 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** Subject to availability of amounts  
33 appropriated for this specific purpose, the reentry and targeted  
34 community workforce development program is established. The  
35 department of corrections shall contract with a not-for-profit  
36 organization representing the interests of and providing programs and  
37 services for underrepresented and marginalized populations in the  
38 state to administer the program. Justice-involved individuals with

1 incarceration histories must be prioritized as cohort participants.  
2 The program shall provide cohort participants:  
3 (1) Digital and financial literacy training;  
4 (2) Support identifying and overcoming digital barriers;  
5 (3) Employment services such as job searching and interviewing  
6 skills;  
7 (4) Case management services;  
8 (5) Placement services including post-placement support;  
9 (6) Job skills training to include, at a minimum, community  
10 broadband and infrastructure technician, and help desk technician;  
11 and  
12 (7) A living allowance.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** Beginning November 1, 2024, and every two  
14 years thereafter, the board shall report to the appropriate  
15 committees of the legislature, in accordance with RCW 43.01.036,  
16 recommendations on how the state can support job seeker and employer  
17 needs in response to the changing information technology workforce.  
18 The report must include the recommendations of the digital  
19 empowerment and workforce inclusion workforce advisory committee  
20 established in section 3 of this act.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** Sections 2 through 8 of this act are each  
22 added to chapter 28C.18 RCW.

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