

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1414

As Reported by House Committee On:
Education

Title: An act relating to improving access to career opportunities for students who are participating in or who have completed preparatory secondary career and technical education programs.

Brief Description: Improving access to career opportunities for students.

Sponsors: Representatives Connors, Paul, Rude, Springer, Couture, Keaton, McClintock, Penner, Davis, Tharinger, Shavers and Timmons.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/11/25, 2/18/25 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Directs the statewide career and technical education task force (task force) to recommend changes to laws and practices affecting the training, certification, and employment of 16- and 17-year-olds enrolled in or who completed career and technical education programs.
- Expands the membership and delays the reporting date of the task force.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 18 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Shavers, Vice Chair; Rude, Ranking Minority Member; Keaton, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Callan, Chase, Couture, Donaghy, Eslick, Marshall, McEntire, Ortiz-Self, Pollet, Reeves, Rule, Scott and Stonier.

Staff: Damian Morden-Snipper (786-7296) and Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

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.

Background:

Career and Technical Education.

Career and technical education (CTE) is a planned program of courses and learning experiences that begins with exploration of career options and supports basic academic and life skills. Students must earn one CTE credit to qualify for graduation, but the State Board of Education permits students to meet this requirement through a qualifying occupational education course. Both exploratory and preparatory CTE courses must comply with the standards established by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Students participate in CTE through instruction delivered in several ways, including through programs at middle and high schools and approved online courses. Instruction in CTE programs is also provided at skill centers, which are the regional instructional venues that provide access to comprehensive, industry-defined CTE programs. Skill centers are established by a cooperative agreement and operated by a host school district.

Worksite learning is part of a CTE program where a student has sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at educational institutions that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field, which are aligned to curriculum and instruction.

Employment Laws for Minors.

Federal and state laws regulate the employment, hours, and wages of minors (persons under 18 years of age). Where state laws and federal laws differ regarding labor of minors, the law that affords stricter protections prevails.

The Washington Industrial Welfare Act directs the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) to establish requirements and restrictions on the wages, working hours, and other conditions for the employment of minors in nonagricultural trades and occupations. Work permits are issued to employers by L&I for the employment of minors, and L&I sets rules for the protection of the safety, health, and welfare of minors.

Minors also may not perform certain hazardous work, which L&I rules refer to as "prohibited duties." These include operating or working near dangerous power-driven machinery such as forklifts, woodworking machines, powered food slicers and grinders; handling highly toxic chemicals; or working higher than 10 feet off the ground or floor level. Employers issued a work permit must demonstrate that the proposed employment of a minor meets L&I's rules and health, safety, and welfare standards.

An employer may apply for a variance through L&I, which would allow for a temporary exception to the normal work restrictions for minors based on certain criteria. A student-learner variance allows 16- and 17-year-olds to operate selected machinery and do other hazardous activities that would otherwise be prohibited by L&I rule. The work must be done as part of certain CTE worksite learning programs. The variance will be granted only

if the hazardous activity is incidental to the worksite learning program, intermittent, and closely supervised by a journey-level worker, qualified instructor, or mentor.

Career and Technical Education Task Force.

The statewide career and technical education task force (task force), established in 2024, is developing recommendations related to CTE, including expanding and strengthening the accessibility, stability, and uniformity of secondary work-integrated learning opportunities, as well as recommendations related to the administration and operation of CTE Core Plus, a two-year CTE instruction program designed to provide a pathway to employment in one of three sectors: aerospace and advanced manufacturing, construction, and maritime. The task force is comprised of 10 members, including the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) or the SPI's designee, representatives from state agencies such as the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and the Workforce Training and Education Training Board, and representatives with expertise in CTE issues.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The membership of the statewide career and technical education task force (task force) is expanded to include at least eight additional members, including a representative from the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) and representatives with interests in youth employment or career and technical education (CTE).

The task force must make recommendations for changes to laws and policies necessary to improve students' access to sustained interactions with industry and community professionals and provide firsthand engagement with the tasks required for the various career fields, while also maintaining appropriate protections for the safety and welfare of minors.

In developing its recommendations, the task force is directed to focus on several agency-imposed restrictions related to minors who have completed, are participating in, or are training for a CTE program, a certification, or a licensure. Activities the task force is required to engage in include:

- identifying barriers preventing the training, certification, or employment of minors who are participating in or have completed a CTE program;
- assessing categories of work from which L&I has prohibited minors from engaging but where minors may have received licenses from a state agency or other regulatory authority;
- assessing agency restrictions on working hours or schedules of minors participating in or who have completed a CTE program; and
- assessing requirements and procedures for school districts to receive approval to teach CTE, including whether those requirements and procedures relate to agency-imposed age restrictions.

The deadline for the task force report to the Governor, the Legislature, and the State Board of Education is postponed by one year to November 15, 2026.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, L&I, and other affected agencies are allowed to initiate rules changes based on the task force's recommendations prior to the release of the task force's report or legislative actions as long as these changes comply with federal and state law.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill changes the original bill by directing an existing task force to develop and report the recommendations related to changing laws and policies to improve access to career opportunities for 16- and 17-year-olds who are participating in or who have completed preparatory secondary career and technical education programs. The substitute bill also expands the membership of the task force and delays the report date of the task force.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 19, 2025.

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) Maintaining safeguards for the protection of minors is important, and this should be balanced against the need to remove barriers to youth employment and ensure career access. Many students in career and technical education programs rely on the skills they learn to support their families, and barriers keep them from accessing sustainable careers. Certain industries have a high demand for workers, and many students already have the necessary skills but work permit and variance request requirements impede hiring.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative April Connors, prime sponsor; Yash Kothari, EquiFinancials; Ethan Kuruvilla, EquiFinancials; John Axtell; Paul Randall, Tri-Tech Skills Center; Angela Nemeth, Tri-Tech Skills Center; Nathen Allington, Tri-Tech Skills Center; Ethan Wodehouse, Tri-Tech Skills Center; Lynette Brower, Washington State Skills Center Association; and Katelyn Kean, Northwest Maritime.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.