

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 14-225—sHB 5377

*Program Review and Investigations Committee
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Labor and Public Employees Committee*

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE ON THE REEMPLOYMENT OF OLDER WORKERS AS THEY RELATE TO THE LABOR DEPARTMENT

SUMMARY: This act creates or expands several initiatives for the state’s unemployed workers. It requires the Department of Labor (DOL) to (1) promote the state’s apprenticeship programs and (2) convene a working group to determine whether résumé-writing assistance providers at the CTWorks One-Stop Career Centers should be credentialed. The act also creates initiatives specifically for older unemployed workers (those age 50 or older), such as requiring (1) DOL to create a quick-reference guide of the resources available to older unemployed workers and (2) the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) to publicize the benefits of hiring and retaining older workers and include programs for them in their planning (see BACKGROUND).

In addition, the act creates several workforce development-related initiatives for the state’s higher education system to implement. Among other things, it

1. requires the state Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR) to study expanding its current manufacturing technology center model to create additional “Centers of Excellence” for other high-demand career areas,
2. requires BOR to establish consistent standards for noncredit vocational courses and programs throughout the state public higher education system, and
3. expands certain higher education accountability measures and report requirements to include noncredit vocational courses and programs.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2014 for the provisions on initiatives for the unemployed; July 1, 2014 for the higher education workforce development provisions.

INITIATIVES FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

§ 3 — Apprenticeship Information

The act requires DOL, by January 1, 2015, to develop or approve an annual informational campaign that (1) describes the department’s apprenticeship training program, including the opportunities and benefits it could provide for the state’s unemployed workers, and (2) addresses common misperceptions about the program. DOL must distribute the informational campaign to the state’s Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs), CTWorks One-Stop Career Centers, and

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similar job centers in the state.

§ 4 — Résumé Working Group

The act requires the labor commissioner, by January 1, 2015, to convene a working group that includes representatives from the WIBs, CTWorks One-Stop Career Centers, and similar job centers in the state. The working group must determine, by July 1, 2015, whether people who provide résumé-writing assistance at the One-Stop Career Centers must have a certified professional résumé writer credential.

§§ 1 & 2 — Older Unemployed Workers

The act requires DOL, by January 1, 2015, to develop or approve a one-page quick-reference guide summarizing (1) the public and private resources available to the state's older unemployed workers and (2) how they can access these resources. Within available resources, DOL must ensure that the resources in the quick-reference guide are accessible through the "2-1-1 Infoline" website (an online database of community resources administered by the United Way of Connecticut).

The act requires CETC to coordinate an electronic state hiring campaign administered through DOL's Internet website. The campaign must encourage the reemployment of older workers and include testimony from employers on the value of hiring and retaining older workers. CETC must submit a report on the campaign's status to the Labor Committee by January 1, 2015.

By law, CETC must annually submit to the governor a plan to coordinate the state's employment and training programs to promote comprehensive, individualized employment and training services. The act requires that this plan also coordinate the programs to promote the reemployment of older workers.

HIGHER EDUCATION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

§ 5 — Centers of Excellence and Plus 50 Initiative

The law allows UConn, the state universities, and the regional community-technical colleges (CTCs) to create "centers of excellence," which are distinctive instructional, research, or public service programs. The act requires BOR, as part of an academic and facilities master plan, to examine the potential for expanding the manufacturing technology center model to create additional centers of excellence for other high-demand career areas. (Manufacturing centers currently exist at Asnuntuck, Housatonic, Naugatuck Valley, and Quinebaug Valley community colleges.)

The act also requires BOR, within available resources, to implement the "Plus 50 Initiative" model throughout the regional CTC system. This initiative invests in community colleges to create or expand programs that engage learners age 50 and older, with a focus on workforce training and preparing for new careers.

BOR must report to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement and Labor committees on the master plan results and the Plus 50 Initiative's implementation by July 1, 2015.

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§ 6 — Noncredit Vocational Courses and Programs

The act requires BOR, by January 1, 2015, to establish consistent standards for noncredit vocational courses and programs to be recognized by each constituent unit of the state public higher education system. The constituent units are UConn, the state universities, regional CTCs, and Charter Oak State College.

§ 7 — Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC) Accountability Measures

The law requires HECC to develop accountability measures for BOR and each constituent unit to assess their progress toward certain efficiency, economic development, academic, access, and affordability goals. The act expands the factors HECC must consider when developing these measures to include (1) graduates' ages, (2) graduates from noncredit vocational courses and programs, and (3) the goals adopted by the Planning Commission for Higher Education. By law, the council must also consider factors such as student retention rates, tuition and fees, and financial need, among other things.

The law also requires HECC to report on the employment and earnings of students who leave the constituent units upon graduation or for any other reason. The act expands the report to include students enrolled in noncredit vocational courses and programs. It also requires the report to include information on all students' job retention, employment status, and earnings before enrolling and after completing their courses and programs. Lastly, it requires the reports to be sortable by student age.

§ 8 — Cost and Financial Aid Trend Report

The law requires BOR and the Office of Higher Education to report on (1) regional and national trends in public and private higher education costs and (2) the availability and use of financial aid relative to economic conditions and personal income. The act requires this report to be submitted to the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, instead of the Education Committee. It also limits the financial aid-related reporting requirement to information on financial aid that is available and used for academic and noncredit vocational courses and programs.

BACKGROUND

CTWorks One-Stop Career Centers, WIBs, and CETC

The federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) requires states receiving federal workforce development grants to have a network of "one-stop" offices to provide core employment-related services and access to other federally funded employment and training services. Connecticut has 17 such offices, known as CTWorks Career Centers, that provide services for businesses and job seekers, including job search and career workshops; business seminars; computer labs and resource libraries; and copying, mailing, and faxing services.

Under WIA, the state's five regional WIBs administer and implement their local one-stop offices' workforce development activities. CETC is the statewide

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workforce investment board that, among other things, develops a five-year strategic workforce development plan, reports to federal authorities on WIA implementation, and helps monitor the statewide workforce development system.

OLR Tracking: LRH:MK:JKL:ro