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**SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 8409**

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**State of Washington**

**63rd Legislature**

**2014 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Bailey, Kohl-Welles, Chase, Rivers, Frockt, Parlette, Cleveland, Dammeier, McAuliffe, Keiser, Tom, Conway, and Mullet; by request of Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

Read first time 01/14/14. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1           WHEREAS, Chapter 238, Laws of 1991 created the workforce training  
2 and education coordinating board (workforce board) to provide planning,  
3 coordination, evaluation, and policy analysis for the state training  
4 system as a whole and to provide advice to the governor and the  
5 legislature concerning the training system in cooperation with the  
6 agencies that comprise the state training system and the student  
7 achievement council; and

8           WHEREAS, The workforce board is made up of a unique partnership of  
9 business, labor, education, and training organizations dedicated to  
10 addressing the needs of Washington businesses and workers; and

11           WHEREAS, The state faces the workforce challenges of: (1) An  
12 increasing number of jobs that call for higher levels of education and  
13 skills across a wide range of industries; and (2) Washington businesses  
14 that struggle to find workers with the skills needed to fill key  
15 openings, hampering their ability to be competitive in an increasingly  
16 global economy; and

17           WHEREAS, RCW 28C.18.080 requires the board to update the state  
18 comprehensive plan for workforce training and education, called high  
19 skills high wages, every four years, and the plan was last updated in  
20 2008; and

1       WHEREAS, Students, workers, and employers have many different needs  
2 and requirements for workforce development. By viewing the workforce  
3 system as a series of interconnected pathways, with multiple options  
4 for workers and students to advance, the workforce board is able to  
5 outline strategies to strengthen these pathways so more Washington  
6 residents move ahead into high skill, high wage jobs, while also  
7 helping employers find the skilled workers they depend on; and

8       WHEREAS, The purpose of the high skills high wages plan is to  
9 provide direction to the workforce development system. To meet the  
10 challenges of the next ten years, there needs to be a concerted effort  
11 on the part of all workforce system partners; and

12       WHEREAS, The workforce board used an inclusive process of work  
13 groups, public hearings, and contact with workers and businesses to  
14 develop agreement on the strategies identified in the high skills high  
15 wages plan, and the workforce board secured the unanimous endorsement  
16 of critical constituencies, including business, labor, and the agencies  
17 delivering workforce services; and

18       WHEREAS, This update of the high skills high wages plan takes a new  
19 look at chronic challenges and approaches common issues with a fresh  
20 eye; and

21       WHEREAS, The state comprehensive plan has a ten-year horizon  
22 through 2022, and focuses on the following strategic opportunities:

23       (1) Multiple pathways for initial careers: The multiple pathways  
24 approach expands beyond the traditional education experience to  
25 heighten a student's understanding of career opportunities, as well as  
26 the student's perception of how classroom learning relates to the world  
27 of work. This goal will be accomplished by:

28       (a) Improving availability and quality of career and education  
29 guidance for students in middle school, high school, and postsecondary  
30 institutions. The high skills high wages plan recommends beginning  
31 career guidance at an earlier age, involving parents and guardians, and  
32 valuing all career paths.

33       (b) Identifying, assessing, and certifying skills for successful  
34 careers by increasing workplace and life skills development for  
35 students, and encouraging the use of industry-based skill standards,  
36 assessments, and credentials.

37       (c) Expanding programs of study that bring together a sequence of

1 career-focused courses that start in high school and extend through  
2 college, and improving the transfer of credits earned in a student's  
3 program of study.

4 (d) Increasing the number and types of workplace experiences  
5 available to students and out-of-school youth.

6 (e) Addressing student access and retention by expanding high  
7 school dropout prevention and retrieval programs, increasing  
8 nontraditional opportunities to obtain postsecondary certificates and  
9 degrees, and providing new models of support and employment services,  
10 including special services for diverse populations with multiple  
11 barriers to education and training.

12 (f) Prioritizing job search and placement for people into first  
13 careers by strengthening partnerships between the education and  
14 worksource systems to share job finding information and resources that  
15 teach students job search skills.

16 (2) Multiple pathways for employers and workers that increase  
17 engagement in education and workforce training and better connect  
18 workers with high-wage careers and life-long learning. This goal will  
19 be accomplished by:

20 (a) Increasing employer engagement with the workforce development  
21 system by improving outreach to employers through the use of materials  
22 designed and written with a business audience in mind, engaging  
23 employers in identifying skill standards and developing training  
24 programs that meet their needs, and increasing industry involvement in  
25 work-integrated learning and workforce training.

26 (b) Promoting economic development by connecting workforce  
27 development with job creation and growth. Encourage investing in  
28 strategic economic opportunities and continue to develop and maintain  
29 special initiatives to address critical state and local economic  
30 opportunities.

31 (c) Expanding and supporting learning opportunities for workers at  
32 all stages of their education or career paths.

33 (d) Improving job search and placement services for unemployed and  
34 underemployed workers by addressing the quality and speed of job  
35 matching and referrals between job seekers and employers with job  
36 openings, and making job search and placement assistance more widely  
37 known and available.

1 (3) Washington's workforce development system is a model of  
2 accountability and efficient coinvestment. The high skills high wages  
3 plan calls for improvements to the efficiency, transparency, and  
4 performance of Washington's workforce system to ensure that all aspects  
5 and components of the system work together effectively to meet the  
6 needs of job seekers and employers. This goal will be accomplished by:

7 (a) Strengthening performance accountability across all workforce  
8 development partners by focusing on employment and earnings outcomes.

9 (b) Establishing cost-effective coinvestment models across  
10 government funding streams and across the tri-partite spectrum of  
11 employers, workers, and the government. Reducing barriers to sharing  
12 or splitting funding across funding streams, and establishing cost-  
13 sharing practices and policies that stretch public dollars to serve the  
14 largest number of participants and attain the highest performance  
15 outcome levels; and

16 WHEREAS, The provisions of the comprehensive plan and updates that  
17 are approved by the legislature become the state's workforce policy  
18 unless legislation is enacted to alter the policies set forth therein;

19 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Senate of the State of  
20 Washington, the House of Representatives concurring, hereby approve the  
21 state comprehensive plan for workforce training called "High Skills,  
22 High Wages."

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