

LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE –
WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

I. Clarifying Workforce and Economic Development Terms

1. Statement of Need:

In 2008 the Governor’s office approved this legislative proposal and the bills (HB 2608) passed the full House Higher Education and Senate Higher Education legislative committees but was not pulled from Senate Rules along with many other higher education bills. There was no opposition to the bill and it had shown every sign of passing.

This bill differs from the 2008 bill only in that the definitions for “sector” and “industry clusters” are not included here as they are included in a separate request of the Workforce Board.

The term “high demand” has become very popular in recent years, and has been interpreted in different ways creating confusion among stakeholders. To address this issue the Governor’s office convened a workgroup of agencies to develop common definitions that were completed in 2007. The work group included the Workforce Board, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development; the Employment Security Department; the Department of Labor and Industries; the Higher Education Coordinating Board; and the Council of Presidents. The next step is to place these definitions in statute in order help legislators, agencies and other stakeholders to stay in alignment.

The Common Definitions for terms related to “high demand” are:

High Employer Demand Program of Study: Undergraduate or graduate certificate, apprenticeship or degree program in which the number of students prepared for employment per year (from in-state institutions) is substantially less than the number of projected job openings per year in that field—statewide, or in a sub-state region.

High Demand Occupation: An occupation with a substantial number of current or projected employment opportunities.

High Student Demand Program of Study: Undergraduate or graduate certificate or degree program, or apprenticeship, in which student demand substantially exceeds program capacity.

The Workforce Board worked with the group to review statutes and this legislative proposal is the result of that review. The purpose of the legislation is to create clarity and consistency in the use of terminology, without changing policy.

The review found a number of places in statute where clarification is needed. These are listed below under the section on “Main Provisions.”

Beyond the changes in the RCW, the biennial and supplemental budget bills will need to incorporate these terms consistently with the statutory changes.

2. Summary of Main Provisions:

The proposed statutory amendments would create clarity and consistency in workforce and economic development terms by:

1. Replacing “high demand field” with “high demand occupation” in a statute for WorkFirst “work activity” (see RCW 74.08A.250).
2. Providing a statutory definition of “high employer demand program of study” in the statute pertaining to the Opportunity Grant program under the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.
3. Replacing “high demand programs” with “high employer demand programs of study” in the state statute pertaining to the pilot program to improve services to customers of vocational rehabilitation under the Department of Labor and Industries (see RCW 51.32.095).
4. Would insert the common definition for “High Demand Occupation” in the statute pertaining to the training benefits program.

Agencies Affected:

Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development
Department of Labor and Industries
Employment Security Department
Higher Education Coordinating Board
State Board for Community and Technical Colleges