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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
54th Legislature, 1st Session, 2019

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| Bill Number | <u>HB318/aHEC</u> | Sponsor | <u>Stapleton/Trujillo, C./Roybal Caballero</u> |
| Tracking Number | <u>.212283.1</u> | Committee Referrals | <u>HEC/HAFC</u> |
| Short Title | <u>Workforce Soft Skills Program for Students</u> | | |
| Analyst | <u>Force</u> | Original Date | <u>2/3/19</u> |
| | | Last Updated | <u>2/12/19</u> |

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of HEC Amendment

The House Education Committee Amendment to HB318 (HB318/aHEC) strikes references to middle schools in the bill, making the proposed program applicable to only high school students.

Synopsis of Original Bill

House Bill 318 (HB318) would appropriate \$4.35 million from the general fund to the Public Education Department (PED) for expenditure in FY19 and FY20 to develop or purchase and implement a comprehensive standards-based online learning program to teach workplace soft skills to middle and high school students for preparation for workforce success. Unexpended or unencumbered balances remaining at the end of the fiscal year revert to the general fund.

The bill defines “soft skills” as “personal attributes needed to succeed in the workplace, including communication, critical thinking, leadership, conflict management, positive attitude, teamwork, and work ethics.”

FISCAL IMPACT

HB318/aHEC appropriates \$4.35 million to PED for expenditure for an online standards-based learning program for high school students to acquire “soft skills” in preparation for entering the workforce.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

So-called “soft skills,” employability skills, or 21st Century workplace skills comprise skills such as clear and effective communication, critical thinking, integrity and ethics, and teamwork, are crucial to success after graduation, whether a student intends postsecondary education or entry into the workforce. These skills are often integrated in to career and technical education (CTE) programs as part of comprehensive practicum-oriented, or applied, learning programs.

In 2015, PED adopted CTE standards, Part 3 of 6.29 NMAC, that correspond directly to the Common Career Technical Core (CCTC). New Mexico was one of 42 states involved in the development of the CCTC, a common set of benchmark standards that define what CTE students should know and be able to do to succeed in the global economy. Developed in 2012 with input from 3,500 experts from public education, postsecondary institutions, and business and industry, the CCTC focus is on alignment between secondary and postsecondary standards.

The CCTC was designed to comprise a set of rigorous, high quality standards for CTE to include specific standards for 16 “career clusters,” each with their own set of standards and their corresponding, more specialized “career pathways” that define what students should be able to accomplish and understand upon completing a program of study.

The CCTC also includes the following career-ready practices to describe the knowledge, dispositions, and career and soft skills that educators should develop in their students:

1. Act as a responsible and contributing citizen and employee.
2. Apply appropriate academic and technical skills.
3. Attend to personal health and financial well-being.
4. Communicate clearly, effectively, and with reason.
5. Consider the environmental, social, and economic impacts of decisions.
6. Demonstrate creativity and innovation.
7. Employ valid and reliable research strategies.
8. Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
9. Model integrity, ethical leadership, and effective management.
10. Plan education and career paths aligned to personal goals.
11. Use technology to enhance productivity.
12. Work productively in teams while using cultural and global competence.

PED notes it has been unable to identify a comprehensive, standards-based online curriculum that would satisfy requirements for all the soft skills identified in the CCTC.

Research consistently indicates that state and student investment in CTE, including soft skills training, is linked to lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates, higher employment rates, greater student engagement, and better student achievement. Further, PED notes several studies indicating participation in student activities increases test scores, grades, and the likelihood of applying for and matriculating to postsecondary institutions. For example, according to the Association for Career and Technical Education, in 2015, the most recent year for which data are available, New Mexico had nearly 60 thousand high school students participating in CTE programs, of which 89 percent of participating seniors graduated. By contrast, in that year, only 69 percent of New Mexico students statewide graduated, representing the lowest graduation rate in the country.

PED indicates, despite the advantages of participation in student activities, it has been unable to find similar results from online, as opposed to in-person, instruction. Indeed, one of the critical factors often cited as being at least partly responsible for increased student performance and engagement in practicums, apprenticeships, and other work-based learning experiences has been the direct, hands-on nature of the programs; it is not clear an attempt to reproduce these effects would be successful when applied through a distance-learning program.

The Higher Education Department (HED) notes that soft skills are taught in many community colleges as part of student preparation for a trade or a career pathway. According to HED, soft skills are also taught by collaborating partners funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Education under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2015, including providers at One-Stop Centers funded through the New Mexico Workforce Solutions Department (WSD), adult education providers funded through HED, and providers of vocational rehabilitation services. New Mexico has a WIOA State Plan, available on the WSD website, outlining the State's workforce system activities, including workforce readiness education. Some of these providers have already invested in online systems that include soft skills training.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED indicates staff would be required to develop or purchase a comprehensive standards-based online learning program for high school students. Further, the department would need to provide professional development in order to support the implementation of a workplace soft skills curriculum. Funding for professional development is not included in HB318/aHEC; however, it could be part of the implementation plan. Allocation of the appropriation between acquisition and implementation is left to PED's discretion.

Staffing would be required for research and for implementation oversight. The Career and College Readiness Bureau estimates that at least one FTE would be required for effective implementation.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

HB318/aHEC indicates the appropriation contained in the bill is for expenditure in both FY19 and FY20, but when the bill becomes effective, if enacted, FY19 will be drawing to a close. The bill includes no emergency clause to make the bill immediately effective upon the governor's signature, meaning no funds will be appropriated prior to the end of the current fiscal year, in July 2019.

RELATED BILLS

HB44, Career-Technical Teacher Development, requires professional development for career technical teachers and educational assistants in the same manner as teachers of other subjects for which PED has promulgated standards and benchmarks.

HB91, Career Technical Education Pilot Project, establishes a seven-year pilot program to fund high-quality CTE programs and monitor their effects on student outcomes.

HB183, Apprenticeship Program for Graduation, requires PED to establish procedures for student to be awarded credit for graduation requirements through completion of work-based training and apprenticeship-related instruction while enrolled in a registered apprenticeship program.

HB299, Career & Technical Student Organizations, appropriates \$650 thousand from the general fund to Regional Education cooperative Six for expenditure in FY20 to support middle and high school and postsecondary students in six career and technical student organizations.

SB353, Career & Tech Student Organizations, which is identical to HB299.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Public Education Department (PED)
- Higher Education Department (HED)

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