

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FISCAL NOTE

BILL NO. House Bill 265

PRINTER NO. 2177

AMOUNT

\$1,200,000

FUND

General Fund

DATE INTRODUCED

January 29, 2019

PRIME SPONSOR

Representative Staats

DESCRIPTION

House Bill 265 amends the Public School Code to further provide for the transfer and articulation of credits between institutions of higher education and schools, establish a classification of code program, provide for career information to students, and codify guidelines regarding career and technical education equipment grants. The specific provisions included in the legislation are as follows:

Transfer and Articulation

The legislation adds provisions requiring each institution of higher education and public school to provide the Transfer and Articulation Oversight Committee ("committee") and the Department of Education ("department") copies of articulation agreements for inclusion in the existing transfer and articulation system, which includes a database, portal and website, within 30 days of entering into any subsequent articulation agreement. Presently, only the community colleges, state-owned universities and state-related universities are mandated to participate and submit this information to the department for inclusion in the system.

The legislation requires each institution of higher education to submit the first interim report describing the status of the institution's articulation agreements within 180 days and by September 30 of each year thereafter.

The legislation requires the committee to meet on a quarterly basis.

Additionally, the legislation requires the department's system to include information regarding agreements that award credit for an industry-recognized credential between institutions of higher education, public schools and institutions that voluntarily participate. It requires the department to extract transfer information from each articulation agreement and each agreement that awards credit for an industry recognized credential and enter the information into the system and provide an interactive search engine for access to the information. It requires the department within 60 days of receiving an articulation agreement or agreement that awards credit for an industry-recognized credential, to update the website and post each articulation agreement and each agreement that awards credit for an industry-recognized credential on its publicly accessible internet website (patrac.org). It also provides that any institution which is not required to submit an agreement to the system may voluntarily submit to the department any articulation agreement or agreement that awards credit for an industry-recognized credential into which the institution enters and have the information included in the system.

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The legislation defines “industry-recognized credential” as a credential that is approved by the department; is sought or accepted by employers within the industry or sector involved as a recognized, preferred or required credential for recruitment, screening, hiring, retention or advancement purposes; and where appropriate, is endorsed by a nationally recognized trade association or organization representing a significant part of the industry or sector.

Classification of Program Code

The legislation requires the department to establish a standard application form for a public entity seeking approval to establish or renew a Classification of program Code (CPC). The form shall be published on the department’s website and contain the following information:

- The name of the public school entity seeking approval to establish or renew a CPC;
- The title of the CPC;
- The occupational competency area of the CPC;
- The description of the CPC;
- A list of skills that a student must attain in order to complete the CPC;
- Evidence of the public school entity’s financial support for the CPC; and
- Any additional information that PDE deems necessary to determine whether to approve or disapprove of the CPC.

The legislation requires the department to issue and update the guidelines every five years to identify the circumstances when a student who successfully completes a course, program, or activity in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics for credit may apply the credit toward the completion of a course, program or activity offered by any area vocational-technical school, technical institute, or vocational school or department.

The legislation also provides an annual timeline for the department’s approval or denial of the program codes.

The legislation provides for the Commission on Agricultural Excellence, in consultation with the department, to establish guidelines for when a student completes an academic course to apply those credits towards the completion of an agricultural education program.

Career Information and Recruitment

The legislation requires a school entity to offer career representatives from skilled trades, publicly identified priority occupations, area vocational-technical schools, community colleges and institutions of higher education the opportunity to participate in the delivery of information regarding employment training and opportunities to students and the recruitment of students. It also requires that every school receiving funding under the Federal Every Student Succeeds Act provide the same access to military recruiters as the other career representatives.

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The legislation requires employer representatives to comply with child abuse clearances and criminal history check laws and give 30 days' notice before visiting schools.

The legislation provides school entities with the following duties: (1) provide each of the representatives with at least one opportunity to offer information to students in grades 4 through 12 regarding educational and career training opportunities either in an assembly or at an area vocational-technical school, community college, institution of higher education or place of employment; (2) document compliance with this section; (3) provide students with access to informational materials and career presenters; and (4) post the plan on the school entity's website.

The legislation prohibits school entities from discouraging students from pursuing any educational or career path.

The legislation requires the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Labor and Industry, to develop (1) informational materials for students related to regional workforce needs, career cluster occupations, priority occupations, training opportunities and future earnings and (2) guidelines to assist school entities with the implementation of the provisions of this legislation.

Career and Technical Education Equipment Grants

The legislation codifies department guidelines regarding Career and Technology Education Equipment Grants and includes that grant awards can be used to purchase an entire set of tools.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The enactment of House Bill 265 will cost the Commonwealth \$1,200,000 in fiscal year 2019-20.

According to the Department of Education, the expansion of the provisions related to the transfer and articulation of credits between institutions of higher education and schools will require it to collect and manage articulation agreements from at least an additional 785 schools at a cost of \$1,200,000. This includes: staff costs of approximately \$300,000 for salary and benefits for two additional staff members to manage the expanded program and \$900,000 for expansion of the website, database and portal to include the additional schools. The department routinely has excess funding available in its General Government Operations Appropriation and should be able to accommodate the additional staffing costs. In addition, the department has a separate appropriation of nearly \$4 million for information technology costs. The costs for the information technology updates are likely to occur across multiple fiscal years and should be able to be accommodated within existing appropriation levels.

The provisions included in the legislation related to the Classification of Code Program should pose a minimal cost as it is markedly similar to a pilot program already operated by the department.

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The provisions requiring the Department of Education, in collaboration with the Department of Labor and Industry to develop information materials detailing regional workforce needs, career cluster occupations, priority occupations, training opportunities and future earnings and, guidelines to implement the provisions contained in this legislation should pose a minimal cost to the agencies, as the information is readily available and the subject matter is routine to their expertise.