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HOUSE BILL 560

**57TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2025**

INTRODUCED BY  
Jack Chatfield

AN ACT

RELATING TO PUBLIC EDUCATION; ENACTING THE WORKFORCE READINESS  
AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT ACT; REQUIRING ESTABLISHMENT OF  
WORKFORCE READINESS PROGRAMS; REQUIRING EVALUATION AND REPORTS;  
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. A new section of the Public School Code is  
enacted to read:

"[NEW MATERIAL] SHORT TITLE.--This act may be cited as the  
"Workforce Readiness and Student Engagement Act"."

SECTION 2. A new section of the Public School Code is  
enacted to read:

"[NEW MATERIAL] DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Workforce  
Readiness and Student Engagement Act:

A. "apprenticeship" means a structured, work-based

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1 learning program for a student that combines classroom  
2 instruction with hands-on training in a specific trade or  
3 profession;

4 B. "certification" means industry-recognized  
5 credentials awarded to a student upon successful completion of  
6 a workforce preparation program;

7 C. "dual credit" means college-level courses in  
8 which a high school student is enrolled and for which the  
9 student earns high school and college credits;

10 D. "on-the-job training and mentorship" means a  
11 program that offers a student practical and direct work  
12 experience with ongoing guidance from a mentor or supervisor  
13 during the program;

14 E. "student" means a public school student in pre-  
15 kindergarten through twelfth grade; and

16 F. "workforce readiness" means that a student  
17 possesses a set of skills, a certification or experiences or a  
18 combination of those that has prepared the student for direct  
19 entry into the workforce."

20 SECTION 3. A new section of the Public School Code is  
21 enacted to read:

22 "[NEW MATERIAL] GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS--WORKFORCE  
23 READINESS PATHWAY--SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES.--

24 A. A student may choose a workforce readiness  
25 pathway as part of the student's graduation requirements.

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1 Workforce readiness pathway options include:

2 (1) a certification program aligned with the  
3 state's workforce needs through which a student may earn a  
4 certification in a professional field with high workforce  
5 demand, including health care, technology, skilled trades and  
6 renewable energy;

7 (2) enrollment in dual credit courses through  
8 an institution of higher education in the state;

9 (3) an apprenticeship or employment with a  
10 local employer that has established a partnership with the  
11 student's school for the purposes described in this section;  
12 and

13 (4) on-the-job training and mentorship that  
14 offers an opportunity for a high school student to learn  
15 directly from professionals in various professional fields.

16 B. Every school that serves students in grades nine  
17 through twelve shall develop an apprenticeship program.

18 C. Every school that will offer a workforce  
19 readiness program shall develop the program in collaboration  
20 with the workforce solutions department to ensure that the  
21 program aligns industries with high labor demands and local  
22 labor market needs."

23 SECTION 4. A new section of the Public School Code is  
24 enacted to read:

25 "[NEW MATERIAL] STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

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1 IMPROVEMENT.--

2 A. To improve student engagement, schools shall  
3 implement engagement strategies, including:

4 (1) programs to expose students to career  
5 pathways through career fairs, internships and visits to work  
6 sites in various industries;

7 (2) development of individualized student  
8 learning plans that incorporate students' career interests and  
9 goals; and

10 (3) recognition of students through rewards,  
11 public acknowledgment, honors and incentives for participation  
12 and achievement in workforce readiness programs.

13 B. The department shall develop a comprehensive  
14 plan to monitor and improve attendance rates. The plan shall  
15 include:

16 (1) early intervention programs that identify  
17 students who are at risk of chronic absenteeism and provide  
18 them with targeted support, including tutoring, mentorship and  
19 family engagement strategies;

20 (2) flexible scheduling and virtual learning  
21 options for students who participate in workforce readiness  
22 pathways; and

23 (3) engagement of employers and community  
24 organizations to assist with providing incentives and  
25 supporting students in workforce-related learning activities."

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1           SECTION 5. A new section of the Public School Code is  
2 enacted to read:

3           "[NEW MATERIAL] PROGRAM EVALUATION--ACCOUNTABILITY.--

4           A. Each year, the department, in collaboration with  
5 the workforce solutions department, shall evaluate the  
6 effectiveness of the workforce readiness programs provided for  
7 in the Workforce Readiness and Student Engagement Act. The  
8 evaluation shall include documentation of:

9                       (1) the number of students who completed a  
10 certification, dual credit course or apprenticeship;

11                      (2) the post-graduation employment rate of  
12 students who previously participated in workforce readiness  
13 programs; and

14                      (3) the impact on student attendance and  
15 engagement rates.

16           B. The department shall submit an annual report to  
17 the legislature on workforce readiness programs provided for  
18 under the Workforce Readiness and Student Engagement Act. The  
19 annual report shall describe the progress of workforce  
20 readiness programs, attendance improvement strategies  
21 implemented through the programs and the effectiveness of the  
22 programs."

23           SECTION 6. APPROPRIATION.--Twenty million dollars  
24 (\$20,000,000) is appropriated from the general fund to the  
25 public education department for expenditure in fiscal year 2026

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1 and subsequent fiscal years to support workforce readiness  
2 programs created pursuant to the Workforce Readiness and  
3 Student Engagement Act. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance  
4 remaining at the end of a fiscal year shall not revert to the  
5 general fund.

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