SENATE, No. 2483

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
215th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JANUARY 14, 2013

Sponsored by:
Senator SANDRA B. CUNNINGHAM
District 31 (Hudson)
Senator M. TERESA RUIZ
District 29 (Essex)
Senator FRED H. MADDEN, JR.
District 4 (Camden and Gloucester)

Co-Sponsored by:
Senator Pou

SYNOPSIS
Establishes the “New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT
As introduced.

(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/29/2013)
AN ACT establishing the “New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission.”

BE IT ENACTED by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:

1. The Legislature finds and declares that:
   a. According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, 54% of all new jobs and 75% of the fastest-growing jobs require some form of postsecondary education;
   b. In February 2009, President Obama declared the lack of educational attainment in the United States a “prescription for economic decline, because we know the countries that out-teach us today will out-compete us tomorrow,” and he set a goal for the United States to reclaim its position as the leader in college graduates by 2020;
   c. According to Complete College America, by 2020, 66% of New Jersey jobs will require a career certificate or college degree but, as of 2011, only 46% of New Jersey’s adults had an associate degree or higher, leaving a skills gap of 20 percentage points;
   d. For New Jersey to have a strong economy, New Jersey must have a skilled workforce that meets the needs of the State’s key industries, including biopharmaceutical and life sciences, health care, engineering, and advanced manufacturing; and
   e. According to the Report of the Governor’s Task Force on Higher Education, New Jersey faces a daunting challenge of ensuring its students are college- and career-ready and needs to “sharpen its focus on key transition points in the educational system where students might lose momentum toward developing postsecondary skills and aspirations,” and the task force recommended that representatives from State government, the business community, school districts, and institutions of higher education meet to explore ways to plug leaks in the educational pipeline.

2. a. There is established in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development a New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission. The commission shall consist of three members as follows: the Secretary of Higher Education, or a designee; the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, or a designee; and a representative of the New Jersey Business Action Center appointed by the Governor.
   b. The commission shall oversee the activities of the education advisory board and the business and workforce advisory board established pursuant to section 3 of this act. The commission shall, upon review of the boards’ findings, develop a report identifying policies that will improve the ability of the State’s schools and public institutions of higher education to meet the demands of tomorrow’s employers. The report may include such
recommendations for legislative or regulatory action as the commission deems appropriate.

3. a. There is established an Education Advisory Board, which shall consist of eight members appointed by the Governor who shall include: one administrator of a senior public institution of higher education; one administrator of a county college; two representatives of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, one of whom shall represent a county vocational school district; one teacher employed in a K-12 school district; one teacher employed in a county vocational school district; one faculty member of a county college; and one faculty member of a senior public institution of higher education.

b. There is established a Business and Workforce Advisory Board, which shall consist of six members appointed by the Governor who shall include: one representative of the State Employment and Training Commission; one representative of a Workforce Investment Board; one representative of the biopharmaceuticals and life sciences industry; one representative of the health care industry; one representative of the engineering industry; and one representative of the advanced manufacturing industry.

c. It shall be the duty of the Education Advisory Board and the Business and Workforce Advisory Board to advise the New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission established pursuant to section 2 of this act on means to:

(1) improve coordination and enhance relations between institutions of higher education, K-12 school districts, and the business community;

(2) align education and training strategies with employer needs in key industries;

(3) develop an education and training strategy for key industries based on an understanding of future workforce and skill needs; and

(4) identify current programs that may be underutilized that could prepare students for jobs in key industries.

d. The Education Advisory Board and the Business and Workforce Advisory Board shall hold such separate and joint meetings as are necessary to carry out their duties.

4. Appointments to the New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission, the Education Advisory Board, and the Business and Workforce Advisory Board shall be made within 30 days of the effective date of this act. Vacancies in the membership of these entities shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments were made. Public members shall serve without compensation but shall be entitled to reimbursement for expenses actually incurred in the performance of their duties within the limits
of funds made available to the commission and boards for their purposes.

The members of the New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission, the Education Advisory Board, and the Business and Workforce Advisory Board shall hold their initial organizational meetings as soon as practicable, but no later than 30 days following the appointment of the members.

5. Staff and related support services shall be provided to the New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission, the Education Advisory Board, and the Business and Workforce Advisory Board by the Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Each entity shall also be entitled to call to its assistance and avail itself of the services of the employees of any State, county or municipal department, board, bureau, commission or agency as it may require and as may be available to it for its purposes.

6. The commission shall issue a final report of its findings and recommendations, including any recommended legislation, to the Governor, the Senate Higher Education Committee, and the Assembly Higher Education Committee no later than six months after its organizational meeting.

7. This act shall take effect immediately and the New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission, the Education Advisory Board, and the Business and Workforce Advisory Board shall expire 30 days after the submission of the commission’s final report.

STATEMENT

This bill establishes, in the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, a New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission. The commission will consist of three members as follows: the Secretary of Higher Education, or a designee; the Commissioner of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, or a designee; and a representative of the New Jersey Business Action Center appointed by the Governor. Under the bill, the commission will oversee the activities of two advisory boards established pursuant to the bill, the Education Advisory Board and the Business and Workforce Advisory Board. The commission will, upon review of the boards’ findings, develop a report identifying policies that will improve the ability of the State’s schools and public institutions of higher education to meet the demands of tomorrow’s employers. The commission will submit its report to the
Governor, the Senate Higher Education Committee, and the Assembly Higher Education Committee.

The bill provides for the establishment of an Education Advisory Board that will consist of eight members appointed by the Governor. The bill also provides for the establishment of a Business and Workforce Advisory Board, that will consist of six members appointed by the Governor. Under the bill the Education Advisory Board and the Business and Workforce Advisory Board will serve to advise the New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission on means to:

(1) improve coordination and enhance relations between institutions of higher education, K-12 school districts, and the business community;

(2) align education and training strategies with employer needs in key industries;

(3) develop an education and training strategy for key industries based on an understanding of future workforce and skill needs; and

(4) identify current programs that may be underutilized that could prepare students for jobs in key industries.

The New Jersey Workforce Development and Education Commission, the Education Advisory Board, and the Business and Workforce Advisory Board will expire 30 days after the submission of the commission’s final report.