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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 20

Offered January 10, 2024

Prefiled January 9, 2024

Requesting the Virginia Board of Workforce Development to study funding models for noncredit workforce credential programs at comprehensive community colleges. Report.

Patron—Aird

Referred to Committee on Finance and Appropriations

WHEREAS, the existing funding model for noncredit workforce credential programs offered at comprehensive community colleges in the Commonwealth requires such programs to be self-sustaining and, unlike for for-credit courses, requires expenses associated with the courses to be funded solely by tuition and fees charged to students; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the self-sustaining funding model for noncredit workforce credential programs offered at comprehensive community colleges, instructors for such programs generally work under contracts for individual training cohorts at rates significantly below those offered in private industry; and

WHEREAS, the self-sustaining funding model for noncredit workforce credential programs can lead to the cancellation of training programs if tuition payments are insufficient to cover course expenses creating challenges for trainees and employers and leading to the underutilization of training infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the role of comprehensive community colleges in the Commonwealth in providing workforce training and educating new generations of highly skilled credentialed workers has grown significantly and continues to grow, with enrollment in programs for the Commonwealth's highest demand fields increasing as the demand for more highly skilled credential workers in such fields increasing; and

WHEREAS, through the New Economy Workforce Credential Grant program established by the General Assembly in 2016, the Commonwealth has invested significantly in supporting students participating in noncredit workforce credential programs but has not made similar investments to allow comprehensive community colleges the programmatic scalability needed to satisfy industry workforce demands; and

WHEREAS, noncredit workforce credential programs offered by comprehensive community colleges offer students a significant opportunity to transform their lives; a 2022 report by the Virginia Community College System found that since the establishment of the New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Program in 2016, students saw, on average, a 55 percent increase in wages after completing a noncredit workforce credential through the New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Program; and

WHEREAS, the self-sustaining funding model for noncredit workforce credential programs offered at comprehensive community colleges is becoming increasingly unsustainable, failing to enable community colleges to offer and fund such programs sufficiently to meet the increasing demand for highly skilled credentialed workers and adequately provide the Commonwealth's next generation of highly skilled credentialed workers with the consistent and quality training they need; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia Board of Workforce Development be requested to study funding models for noncredit workforce credential programs at comprehensive community colleges. The study shall focus on evaluating the existing funding model for noncredit workforce credential programs in relation to the ability of comprehensive community colleges to offer and fund such programs to adequately meet an increased demand for highly skilled credentialed workers, identifying inadequacies in the funding model, and developing recommendations for reforming the funding model to address those inadequacies.

In conducting its study, the Virginia Board of Workforce Development shall convene a work group consisting of representatives from its own membership, including the Secretary of Labor or his designee, the Secretary of Education or his designee, the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System or his designee, one member of the House of Delegates, one member of the Senate, and representatives of industry and organized labor, and such other relevant stakeholders as the Virginia Board for Workforce Development may deem appropriate. In conducting its study, the work group shall:

1. Evaluate and identify disparities between the current funding model for noncredit workforce credential training programs in comparison to the funding models for for-credit courses offered at comprehensive community colleges;

2. Consult with the presidents or other similarly situated executive officers of comprehensive community colleges, representatives of organized labor, and representatives of industry and trade associations and private employers that have a high demand for noncredit workforce credentials;

3. Review instructor salaries for noncredit workforce credential training programs under the current funding model and consider options for increasing such salaries, including options to create full-time

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59 employee positions for non-credit workforce training instructors and supplementing differential pay to create
60 a parity between instructor salaries and standard labor market employee rates;

61 4. Evaluate the capacity of the Virginia Community College System as a whole to implement existing
62 noncredit workforce credential programs in comparison to the demand for student enrollment in such
63 programs and the industry demand for highly skilled credentialed workers;

64 5. Examine and evaluate models employed by other states to fund noncredit workforce credentials through
65 community colleges or other public institutions of higher education and training;

66 6. Consider and make recommendations on options for reforming the funding model for noncredit
67 workforce credential programs to resolve existing inadequacies, particularly inadequacies relating to
68 instructor salaries, and to improve the sustainability of offering and providing such programs to ensure that
69 the Virginia Community College System can continue to meet the increasing demand for highly skilled
70 credentialed workers in the Commonwealth; and

71 7. Submit to the Chairs of the House Committees on Appropriations and Education and the Senate
72 Committees on Finance and Appropriations and Education and Health by November 1, 2024 a preliminary
73 report and by June 30, 2025 a final report on its findings and recommendations.

74 Technical assistance shall be provided to the Virginia Board of Workforce Development by the Board of
75 Education, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, the Virginia Community College System, and
76 the Department of Workforce Development and Advancement. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall
77 provide assistance to the Virginia Board of Workforce Development for this study, upon request.

78 The Virginia Board of Workforce Development shall complete its meetings for the first year by
79 November 30, 2024, and for the second year by November 30, 2025, and the Virginia Board of Workforce
80 Development shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and report of its
81 findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document for each year. The executive
82 summaries and reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative
83 Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the
84 next Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.