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SENATE BILL NO. 511

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 13, 2026

A BILL to direct the Department of Education to prepare a return on investment report of career and technical education programs, associate degree programs, and baccalaureate degree programs in the Commonwealth for the purpose of ensuring future funding allocations are aligned with industry and market demand and support postsecondary success.

 Patron—Cifers

 Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *The Department of Education (the Department) shall prepare a return on investment report of the career and technical education programs, associate degree programs, and baccalaureate degree programs offered by public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth for the purpose of informing decisions relating to future allocations of funding to ensure alignment with industry and market demand and to support postsecondary success in the Commonwealth. In preparing the return on investment report, the Department shall consult with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, career and technical education directors, the Virginia Community College System, and such other stakeholders and industry partners as deemed appropriate by the Department. The return on investment report shall:*

1. Identify the (i) career and technical education programs offered by public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, including the Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back (G3) Program established pursuant to § 23.1-2911.2 of the Code of Virginia, the New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Program established pursuant to Article 4.1 (§ 23.1-627.1 et seq.) of Chapter 6 of Title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia, and other programs that support career and technical education; (ii) associate degree programs offered by public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth; and (iii) baccalaureate degree programs offered by public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth;

2. Include for each category identified pursuant to subdivision 1:

a. A return on investment analysis;

b. The following information: (i) the number of students enrolled in such programs; (ii) the number of degrees or certificates awarded for such programs annually; (iii) the average time to completion of such programs; (iv) the average cost for completion of such programs including any tuition and mandatory fees; (v) the average student loan debt incurred; (vi) the employment rate of graduates; (vii) the average annual earnings of graduates one, five, and 10 years after graduation or completion of the program; and (viii) the amount of funding annually allocated to such programs from (a) the federal government; (b) the Commonwealth; and (c) local governments; and

c. An evaluation of the (i) average value of the degree or certificate earned through such programs in the workforce, relative to the average cost of completing such programs, and (ii) how long it takes, on average, to recoup the Commonwealth's investment in each degree or certificate earned through such programs; and

3. Include recommendations relating to alignment of future funding allocations with workforce and industry demand and postsecondary success.

The Department shall submit the return on investment report to the Chairs of the Senate Committees on Education and Health and Finance and Appropriations and the House Committees on Education and Appropriations by November 1, 2026.

INTRODUCED

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