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SENATE BILL NO. 756

AMENDMENT IN THE NATURE OF A SUBSTITUTE

(Proposed by the Senate Committee on Finance
on January 30, 2008)

(Patron Prior to Substitute—Senator Ruff)

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 2.2-2674.01, relating to creation of the Virginia Career Readiness Certificate Program; report.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding a section numbered 2.2-2674.01 as follows:

§ 2.2-2674.01. Virginia Career Readiness Certificate Program.

A. There is created the Virginia Career Readiness Certificate Program (the Program) to certify the workplace and college readiness skills of Virginians, in order to better prepare them for continued education and workforce training, successful employment, and career advancement.

B. The Program may be offered through public high schools, community colleges, one-stop centers, technical centers, vocation rehabilitation centers, the Department of Correctional Education, institutions of higher education, and any other appropriate institutions as determined by the Virginia Workforce Council.

C. The Program shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. A nationally recognized multilevel Career Readiness Certificate and related pre-instructional assessment tool to quantify an individual's level of proficiency in the following measurable work-ready skills: (i) reading, (ii) applied math, (iii) locating information, and (iv) any additional skills necessary to meet business and industry skill demand;

2. Targeted instruction and remediation skills training to address those work-ready skills in which the individual is not proficient as measured by the pre-instructional assessment tool designed to meet identified specific skill needs of local employers;

3. A Career Readiness Certificate awarded to individuals upon successful attainment of work-ready skills as documented by the assessment tool; and

4. A statewide online data system to serve as the repository for Career Readiness Certificate attainment data. The system shall (i) serve as the administrative tool to administer and help promote the Program; (ii) incorporate online services that enable employers to search individual Career Readiness Certificate data to determine skill levels and locate certified individuals in the state or a region; and (iii) incorporate online services that offer individuals tools for career exploration, continued education opportunities, job-readiness practice, and job search capabilities. The Virginia Workforce Council shall seek to ensure the confidentiality of individual Career Readiness Certificate recipients. This shall include provisions for individuals, except for employer-sponsored individuals, to opt-in and opt-out of the statewide online data system at any test occurrence. Additionally, the provisions of §§ 2.2-3800 through 2.2-3803 shall be considered in individual confidentiality protections adopted by the Virginia Workforce Council.

D. The Council, in consultation with the Secretary of Education, shall develop policies and guidelines necessary to implement and administer the Program.

E. The Council shall report Program outcomes to the Governor, the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee, Senate Education and Health Committee, House Commerce and Labor Committee, and House Education Committee of the General Assembly by December 1 of each year. The report shall make recommendations for improving the program, including funding recommendations.

2. That the Council shall investigate the creation of a Work-Ready Community Certification Program and report its findings to the Governor, the House Commerce and Labor Committee, House Education Committee, Senate Commerce and Labor Committee, and Senate Education and Health Committee of the General Assembly by December 1, 2008.

3. That funding for the provisions of this act shall be based on a budget approved by the Virginia Workforce Council and shall come from funds made available under the Workforce Investment Act, or from other sources as shall be made available, in an amount not to exceed \$1 million.

4. That the provisions of this act shall not become effective unless an appropriation of nongeneral funds effectuating the purposes of this act is included in a general appropriation act passed by the 2008 Session of the General Assembly, which becomes law.