

LEGISLATIVE BILL 851

Approved by the Governor April 2, 2024

Introduced by Jacobson, 42.

A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to the Department of Economic Development; to amend section 81-1210.02, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022; to change provisions relating to internship grants; to provide an operative date; to repeal the original section; and to declare an emergency.
Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. Section 81-1210.02, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022, is amended to read:

81-1210.02 (1) The intent of sections 81-1210.01 to 81-1210.03 is to provide students with valuable internship opportunities in order to retain such students in the State of Nebraska at institutions of higher education, convert students to full-time employment in Nebraska, and attract workers to Nebraska by assisting Nebraska businesses willing to provide paid internships.

(2) A business may apply to the department for a grant to assist in providing a student an internship if:

(a) The business certifies that the internship meets the definition of internship in section 81-1210.01;

(b) The business will pay the student at least the state minimum hourly wage for the internship;

(c) The internship will be completed within the State of Nebraska;

(d) The internship will be completed within a period of no more than twenty-four months; and

(e) The internship will be for a duration sufficient to allow the student to gain significant valuable work experience and knowledge.

(3)(a) The department may provide grants for internships to reimburse the cost of wages paid to businesses with less than one hundred fifty full-time-equivalent employees.

(b) The department may also provide grants for internships to any business to reimburse the costs for any of the following:

(i) Tuition reimbursement for courses at institutions of higher education;

(ii) Internship housing;

(iii) Transportation expenses relating to internships; and

(iv) Internship administrative or recruitment costs.

(c) The maximum grant award per internship is seven thousand five hundred dollars.

(4) A business may apply for no more than two grants for the same student and shall not be awarded more than one hundred grants total in any twelve-month period.

(5) A business may allow a student to telecommute if the business is located in Nebraska and more than thirty miles from the college, university, or other institution of higher education in which the student is enrolled ~~and if the college, university, or other institution of higher education is in Nebraska.~~

(6) The department shall, to the extent possible, assure that the distribution of grants under sections 81-1210.01 to 81-1210.03 provides equitable access to the grants by all geographic areas of the state.

(7) The department shall, to the extent possible, assure that the grants awarded pursuant to sections 81-1210.01 to 81-1210.03 are for internships which provide valuable learning opportunities for students who will be seeking employment in a professional or technical field.

(8) The department shall not allocate more than one million five hundred thousand dollars in any one fiscal year from the Job Training Cash Fund or its subaccounts for purposes of this section. The department may receive funds from public, private, or other sources for purposes of this section.

(9) The department shall develop a qualified action plan by January 1 of each even-numbered year. The plan shall, at a minimum, set forth the department's priorities and selection criteria for awarding grants for internships. In order to encourage students from across Nebraska to pursue internships, the plan shall also include strategies for affirmatively marketing internships to Nebraska students in high schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions of higher education in Nebraska. Such strategies shall place an emphasis on marketing to underserved student populations as defined by the department in the plan. The department shall submit the plan to the Governor for approval.

(10) The department shall execute a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Labor before December 31, 2022, to ensure the exchange of available Department of Labor data throughout the continuum from prekindergarten to postsecondary education to the workforce. The department may utilize data and agreements under sections 79-776, 85-110, 85-309, and 85-1511.

(11) The department shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the Legislature on or before July 1 of each year which includes, but is not limited to, a description of the demand for internship grants and programs under sections 81-1210.01 to 81-1210.03 from all geographic regions in Nebraska, a

listing of the recipients and amounts of internship grants awarded in the previous fiscal year, the impact of the internship grants, and an evaluation of the internship grants and programs under sections 81-1210.01 to 81-1210.03 based on the documented goals of the recipients. The report submitted to the Legislature shall be submitted electronically. The department may require recipients to provide periodic performance reports to enable the department to fulfill the requirements of this subsection. The report shall contain no information that is protected by state or federal confidentiality laws.

(12) The department may enter into a contract with a Nebraska-based nonprofit entity for the purposes of carrying out any or all of the provisions of sections 81-1210.01 to 81-1210.03.

Sec. 2. This act becomes operative on July 1, 2024.

Sec. 3. Original section 81-1210.02, Revised Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2022, is repealed.

Sec. 4. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when passed and approved according to law.