
SENATE BILL 6289

State of Washington

68th Legislature

2024 Regular Session

By Senator Boehnke

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing a work group to assess the
2 restrictions on the employment of 16 and 17 year olds; and creating
3 new sections.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that the state,
6 in partnership with employers and the public school system, has
7 developed and invested in preparatory secondary career and technical
8 education programs for high school students. These programs have been
9 developed and expanded with the intent of providing high school
10 students with hands-on work experience, coupled with education and
11 training to work in various industries throughout our state. Many of
12 these programs are designed to allow students to begin working in the
13 field in conjunction with participating in training. Field work
14 opportunities can bridge the gap between high school and entering the
15 workforce, thereby helping students succeed following graduation.
16 However, many employers are unable or unwilling to hire 16 and 17
17 year old students participating in these programs due to extensive
18 laws and rules governing the employment of minors. This includes, for
19 example, restrictions on when students can work and the job duties
20 they are able to perform. Some of these state laws and rules go
21 beyond what is required by federal law.

1 (2) Therefore, the legislature hereby directs the department of
2 labor and industries to convene a work group to review existing laws,
3 rules, and agency policies, and develop recommendations for changes
4 to such laws, rules, and policies in order to enhance the
5 employability of 16 and 17 year old students, with a particular focus
6 on students who are participating in or who have completed a
7 preparatory secondary career and technical education program and want
8 to begin working, while also protecting their safety and welfare.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The department of labor and industries
10 must convene a work group for the purposes of assessing the current
11 restrictions on the employment of 16 and 17 year old minors. The work
12 group shall provide recommendations on any necessary policy changes
13 to those restrictions in order to improve access to career
14 development opportunities, particularly for minors participating in
15 preparatory secondary career and technical education programs, while
16 also maintaining appropriate protections for their safety and
17 welfare.

18 (2) In developing recommendations required by this section, the
19 work group shall assess the following:

20 (a) Process for obtaining minor work permits;

21 (b) Categories of prohibited work, focusing on those categories
22 where minors can access related training through preparatory
23 secondary career and technical education programs or other programs;

24 (c) Hours and scheduling restrictions, including the
25 accessibility of the current variance process;

26 (d) Procedures for obtaining permission to work from local school
27 districts;

28 (e) Wages; and

29 (f) Relevant insurance issues.

30 (3) To the extent practicable, the following entities, groups,
31 and interests should be represented in the work group:

32 (a) Department of labor and industries;

33 (b) Office of the superintendent of public instruction;

34 (c) State board for community and technical colleges;

35 (d) Career connect Washington and the career connected learning
36 cross-agency work group under RCW 28C.30.030;

37 (e) Workforce training and education coordinating board;

38 (f) Washington state skills center association;

1 (g) Representatives of interested business and employer
2 associations and organizations;

3 (h) Representatives of interested labor organizations in relevant
4 trades; and

5 (i) Representatives of other interested entities, groups, and
6 interests identified by the department of labor and industries.

7 (4) The department of labor and industries may initiate changes
8 to agency rules and practices based on recommendations of the work
9 group prior to the issuance of the required reports and any related
10 legislative action in order to appropriately expand access to career
11 opportunities for 16 and 17 year old minors, provided that any such
12 changes comply with federal and state law.

13 (5) The work group must submit to the appropriate committees of
14 the legislature, in accordance with RCW 43.01.036, an initial report
15 with recommendations by December 1, 2024, and a final report with
16 recommendations by October 1, 2025. The recommendations may include
17 proposals to modify state laws and department rules and practices.
18 The reports shall also include a summary of any changes to department
19 rules and practices initiated or completed as a result of the work
20 group's findings and recommendations.

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