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Legislative Report from the Commission on SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER EDUCATION

New York State Assembly • Carl E. Heastie, Speaker • Harry B. Bronson, Chair

Message from the Chair



July 2016

Dear Friend:

With the 2016 legislative session now concluded, I am pleased to share with you accomplishments of the Commission on Skills Development and Career Education.

Throughout this past year, I focused Commission efforts on improving workforce development in New York, including through apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships. We held a roundtable and three public hearings around the state, and I introduced six bills as a result, including comprehensive legislation to expand apprenticeship opportunities by providing tax credits for businesses and grants for nonprofits and small businesses employing apprentices. The goal of this effort, which was included in the Assembly Budget proposal, is to encourage more businesses and trades to train job seekers to close a middle-skills gap and to help youth and adults earn while they learn and get on a solid career path.

I also introduced bills that would require the state to make better use of existing data to help connect job seekers with jobs, show the effectiveness of workforce development programs, enable high school students to learn about training opportunities, and make available to the public a full and detailed listing of all state and federal workforce development funding programs.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you.

Sincerely yours,



Harry B. Bronson
Assembly Member
Chair, Commission on Skills Development and Career Education

Skills Commission Roundtable and Hearing: Examining Existing Apprenticeships and Ways to Increase the Number and Type of Apprenticeships; October 20, 2015 and December 11, 2015

In partnership with my Assembly colleagues Michele R. Titus, Labor Committee Chair, and Fred W. Thiele, Small Business Committee Chair, I held a roundtable in Rochester and a public hearing in New York City to learn about existing apprenticeship programs and ways New York State can expand the number and type of apprenticeship opportunities. Participants included representatives from the state Department of Labor, building and trades unions, private businesses, four-year and community colleges, the Workforce Development Institute, the Center for Workforce Development, and others.

Apprenticeships remain a relatively small share of the state's workforce investment despite their success as a way to train workers and connect them to good-paying jobs. With an ongoing need to address a middle-skills gap and a need to help a growing number of people disconnected from work and school, there has been a renewed look nationally at apprenticeship programs.

Roundtable participants agreed apprenticeships are a proven path to the middle class, providing living wages and good benefits. Many

said that the building trades administer the gold standard for apprenticeship models, which can range in duration from one to six years.

Many participants said the state should encourage apprenticeships, in part because as many as one in three experienced tradespeople are able to retire today, creating a need for new apprentices. Participants suggested the state should market, encourage, and expand access to apprenticeship opportunities, especially to non-building trade industries, such as optics and photonics, and health care, and provide funding for training, especially for small businesses, BOCES, and community colleges. Several participants argued that high schools and parents need to push apprenticeships as enthusiastically as they do college.

The 2016-17 State Budget includes new funding of \$5 million for apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship Legislation Introduced by Assembly Member Bronson

Empire State Apprenticeship Program A.3465-A/S.7061

I introduced this bill to create the Empire State Apprenticeship Program, which would include a tax credit and a grant program to encourage the expansion of apprenticeship opportunities both in number and types of industry.

The Empire State Apprenticeship Program would provide a multi-year, refundable, and progressive tax credit to employers for each apprentice they employ, with annual increases in the credit as the apprentice advances in his or her training, starting at \$2,000 a year and increasing an additional \$1,000 a year with a cap of \$4,500 a year. The Act would provide an enhanced credit of an additional \$500 each year for a dedicated mentor, someone who would help an apprentice overcome hurdles so they complete their apprenticeship and get a job.

The Act would also include a grant program to help support apprenticeships in non-profits, such as those in health care, higher education or social services, as well as in small businesses with 25 or fewer employees. Rather than a tax credit, this grant program would achieve the same goal of helping more entities absorb the cost of initiating apprenticeships by funding capital and operations costs, as well as the supply of mentors. Grants would be up to \$50,000 and would have to be matched one to one by the grantee. This bill was included in the Assembly's budget proposal.

Making Students Aware of Apprenticeships A.10572/S.7915

This bill would require the Commissioner of Education to develop guidelines to encourage high school students to participate in apprenticeships and to raise their awareness of apprenticeship and trade opportunities.

We heard during our Roundtable in Rochester that high school guidance counselors still steer students away from the trades and apprenticeships and toward college, despite the demonstrated success of apprenticeships to help young people earn while they learn without accumulating debt. And, every year many jobs in New York, including in the trades, go unfilled because of the lack of workers with the appropriate skills necessary to fill those jobs.

Requiring high schools to inform students about the trades and apprenticeships would give students the chance to enter apprenticeships and gain valuable work skills, and it would help businesses fill middle-skill jobs that are needlessly left vacant.

Skills Commission Hearing: Examining Pre-Apprenticeships and Work Preparation Programs and How to Replicate Successful Ones; May 23, 2016

In partnership with Assembly Labor Committee Chair Michele R. Titus, I sponsored a public hearing in Albany on Pre-Apprenticeships and Work Preparation Programs in New York State.

Pre-apprentice programs serve as an introduction to industries giving students and others a chance to see where their desires and aptitudes lie. Generally, pre-apprenticeships prepare students for apprenticeships, teaching soft skills—such as safety, conflict resolution, time management, and math—and provide a sample of what hard skills are needed for a trade or industry. These programs are especially important for a lot of people who may not be ready for an apprenticeship.

The most common source of pre-apprenticeships in the state appears to be run by the building trades unions, which warned that if the state does decide to support and replicate successful programs,

these programs must be long-term to create pathways to long-term, middle class employment opportunities.

Many cited the Edward J. Malloy Initiative for Construction Skills, Inc. as a highly successful pre-apprentice program, preparing graduating New York City public high school seniors for entry into unionized building and construction trades apprenticeship programs.

The Department of Labor cited the existence of a “direct entry” program that connects pre-apprentices to actual apprenticeship openings. And, starting this year, the state will begin the first ever state pre-apprentice program to leverage state contracts to help about 100 youth in need of work get connected with businesses in need of workers.

New York State Budget: Slight increases in workforce development, worker training, adult education, and higher education support programs

Through State budget negotiations, we secured slight increases in funding for workforce development, adult education, and higher education support programs in the enacted 2016-17 State Budget.

The 2016-17 State Budget includes \$5 million for apprenticeships, \$4 million for the upstate Workforce Development Institute, and \$31 million for summer youth employment.



Speaking to NYATEP's NYC and Upstate Policy and Advocacy Workforce Academy in Albany, March 1, 2016

Skills Commission Hearing: Examining the Best Practices for Workplace Safety Programs and Opportunities for Additional Worker Training; April 27, 2016

Along with Assembly Labor Committee Chair Michele R. Titus and Assembly Subcommittee on Workplace Safety Chair Francisco Moya, I sponsored a public hearing to examine the best practices for workplace safety programs and to ways to encourage and increase their use.

Effective workplace safety programs can help ensure workers get home safely, without injury, and reduce staff turnover, absenteeism, and risk of fines, and increase productivity. Still, employers across the state often fail to provide adequate safety mechanisms and proper training to ensure that workers are safe.

According to hearing testimony, there were 47 fatalities in construction in 2014 in New York State, which represents a disproportionate number for that industry compared to others, and most were preventable had more safety precautions been taken by workers and site managers. The greatest numbers of fatalities were among Hispanic and immigrant workers, especially on small building sites. Most of the fatalities were among non-union workers, who witnesses said do not get as much safety training as union workers.

Recommendations to improve safety at worksites included: increase the number of safety inspectors (currently there are only 66 statewide, which witnesses estimated could not examine all sites in even more than 100 years); require basic safety training for all construction workers; improve workers compensation processes and amounts for all workers; fight efforts to repeal the Scaffold Law, which witnesses argue protects all construction workers; and, enact the Elevator Safety Act (A.1787-C), a bill I sponsored, which would require licensing of persons engaged in building, construction and maintenance of elevators.

Legislation Introduced by Assembly Member Bronson

Clearinghouse for Workforce Data A.9933-A/S.8003

I introduced Assembly Bill 9933-A, which would create a state knowledge center and clearinghouse for workforce related data. Reports generated in response to this bill will ultimately help us see how state and federal workforce dollars are spent and whether job training and education programs are helping people get and keep good-paying, long-term employment.

The state spends billions of state and federal dollars each year on educating and training future workers through the Pre-K-12 system, public colleges and universities, workforce development programs, and adult literacy programs. Yet policymakers and the public have little idea which of these programs are effective and actually help participants get on career paths that lead to decent-paying jobs.

The purpose of the bill is to require the Department of Labor to issue a Request for Proposals to enlist an academic institution—with a proven record of analyzing labor market data—to serve as the state's clearinghouse for wage reporting data. Analysis of this data would allow the state to benefit from the expertise of academics in conducting important research while keeping the data protected.

Using this data could also help identify the career areas—for corporate positions, as well as for skilled labor—that are in need of quality workers, which could then inform the academic, career and educational programming colleges use to teach students to succeed in these particular fields.

Many other states are already using wage data, in combination with education data, to regularly assess education and workforce programs and conduct inquiries about specific programs. This bill passed in the Assembly.

Legislation Introduced by Assembly Member Bronson

Catalogue of Workforce Development Funding A.9416-A/S.7990

Frustrated by a lack of clarity about which state- and federally-funded programs provide dollars for workforce and skills development, as they are spread out across many agencies and vary considerably in criteria and recipients, I decided it would be valuable to require the state to publish this information in one place, in simple language. All told, more than 50 state and federal workforce development funds are spread across many state agencies, and each has different rules and requirements written in the budget, statute and regulation, some of which change from year to year.

This bill would require the Department of Labor to compile and report annually on state and federal workforce development program funding, and to make a full listing of programs available for public viewing online. This bill passed in the Assembly.

Other Commission-Related Bills Chair Bronson Sponsored

A.10578/S.7967

This bill, which passed in the Assembly and Senate, would require the Department of Labor to make public labor market and forward facing employment data to best advise students on the skills and experience needed to fill the many jobs in New York that needlessly go unfilled. Every year many jobs in New York go unfilled because students and administrators do not have all the data available of the many jobs available and the training and education necessary to obtain such jobs. Often, the best way to fill such jobs requires raising awareness about such opportunities at the high school and community college levels allowing students the chance to identify jobs, and with the assistance of guidance counselors, map the necessary strategies to fill those jobs.

A.10577-A/S.7968-A

This bill would amend the education law—reflecting recommendations by the Regional State University of New York Community College Councils on regional workforce needs and student employment rates upon graduation—to structure, or restructure, certificate or degree programs at community colleges so as to more successfully place graduates of such programs in jobs.



Legislative Report from the Commission on SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER EDUCATION

Carl E. Heastie, Speaker • Harry B. Bronson, Chair

As a member on the JOBS & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT workgroup of the Rochester anti-poverty initiative, we met regularly with representatives from business, education, and the trades to develop long-term policies that will help people escape a long and debilitating cycle of poverty in the Rochester area. It's been encouraging to see the policies we are setting in motion take root and help improve lives and living conditions in the region.