

1 HB498
2 210508-1
3 By Representatives Collins and Baker
4 RFD: Education Policy
5 First Read: 04-MAR-21

SYNOPSIS: This bill would create the Alabama Credential Quality and Transparency Act and would establish the Alabama Workforce Council Committee on Credential Quality and Transparency.

This bill would provide for full, free, open, public, and interoperable essential data about all educational and occupational credentials and competencies available to the residents of the state and would provide a database through which students, job seekers, and employers may search, compare, and analyze common information about credentials and competencies before making decisions about the quality and value of credentials and the education and workforce programs related to those credentials.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 Relating to credentials and the workforce; to create
2 the Alabama Credential Quality and Transparency Act as a new
3 Division 9, commencing with Section 41-29-350, Article 3,
4 Chapter 29, Title 41, Code of Alabama 1975; to establish the
5 Alabama Workforce Council Committee on Credential Quality and
6 Transparency; to provide for full, free, open, public, and
7 interoperable essential data about all educational and
8 occupational credentials and competencies available to the
9 residents of the state; to provide a database through which
10 students, job seekers, and employers may search, compare, and
11 analyze common information about credentials and competencies
12 before making decisions about the quality and value of
13 credentials and the education and workforce programs related
14 to those credentials.

15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

16 Section 1. Division 9, commencing with Section
17 41-29-350, is added to Article 3, Chapter 29, Title 41 of the
18 Code of Alabama 1975, to read as follows:

19 §41-29-350. Short title.

20 This division shall be known and may be cited as the
21 Alabama Credential Quality and Transparency Act.

22 §41-29-351. Legislative findings.

23 The Legislature finds and declares all of the
24 following:

25 (1) With nearly 1,000,000 unique credentials in the
26 United States, and at least 5,000 available from Alabama-based
27 providers alone, too many Alabamians do not know which

1 credentials lead to desired outcomes, and employers are unable
2 to understand what skills workers bring to a job.

3 (2) It is critical for credential providers to
4 publish credentials to the Alabama Credential Registry in
5 searchable and comparable formats using a common schema
6 aligned with national standards and trends.

7 (3) There is a need for better, consistent, and
8 transparent data about credentials and their outcomes in the
9 state to more accurately enable the Alabama Committee on
10 Credentialing and Career Pathways to identify credentials of
11 value.

12 §41-29-352. Definitions.

13 For the purposes of this act, the following terms
14 shall have the following meanings:

15 (1) ALABAMA CREDENTIAL REGISTRY. The virtual
16 repository of Alabama competency and credential data,
17 accessible to credential providers and the public through an
18 online profile.

19 (2) ALABAMA OCCUPATIONAL ONTOLOGY. The seven-tiered
20 system for coding competencies and the five-tiered system for
21 coding credentials used to assign a unique alpha numeric
22 number to each competency and credential.

23 (3) COMMITTEE. The Alabama Workforce Council
24 Committee on Credential Quality and Transparency.

25 (4) COMPETENCY. A description of measurable or
26 observable knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for the
27 successful performance of a task in a given context.

1 (5) CONSUMERS. Includes, but is not limited to,
2 students, learners, workers, unemployed individuals, veterans,
3 employers, educators, counselors, program administrators,
4 policy makers, advocates, researchers, parents, and other
5 individuals who are invested in understanding the quality and
6 value of credentials and competencies in the education and
7 employment marketplace.

8 (6) CREDENTIAL. A qualification, achievement, or
9 recognition of competence by an external entity used to
10 indicate suitability. The term includes, but is not limited
11 to, diplomas, microcredentials, badges, certificates, industry
12 recognized and registered apprenticeship certificates of
13 completion, occupational licenses, certifications, and degrees
14 of all types and levels.

15 (7) CREDENTIAL PROVIDER. Any organization that owns,
16 offers, or issues an educational or occupational credential to
17 an individual funded through the Workforce Innovation and
18 Opportunity Act (P.L. 113-128) or the Carl D. Perkins Career
19 and Technical Education Act of 2006 (P.L. 115-224).

20 §41-29-353. Establishment and membership.

21 (a) The Alabama Workforce Council Committee on
22 Credential Quality and Transparency is established to make
23 credential and competency data collected through the Alabama
24 Credential Registry publicly available, searchable,
25 comparable, and interoperable using open specifications and
26 linked data formats, including credential transparency
27 description language specifications.

1 (b) The committee shall be composed of the following
2 members:

3 (1) One representative each from the 16 technical
4 advisory committees of the Alabama Committee on Credentialing
5 and Career Pathways.

6 (2) The Governor, or his or her designee, who shall
7 chair the committee, shall vote only in the case of a tie, and
8 may not make or second motions.

9 (3) One nonvoting ex officio representative
10 appointed by the state agency designated by the Governor to
11 manage the Alabama Credential Registry.

12 §41-29-354. Duties.

13 (a) On or before December 31, 2021, and every
14 December 31 thereafter, the committee shall provide to the
15 Alabama Committee on Credentialing and Career Pathways a
16 current list of credentials of value, to be known as the
17 compendium of valuable credentials, for each of the industry
18 sectors. The committee shall review each credential published
19 to the Alabama Credential Registry, on a continuing basis and
20 at least quarterly, against the quality assurance criteria as
21 determined by the Alabama Committee on Credentialing and
22 Career Pathways, and shall assign each credential and
23 associated competency registered to the Alabama Credential
24 Registry with an alpha numeric number using the Alabama
25 Occupational Ontology.

1 (b) The committee shall ensure that open credential
2 and competency data is included in, used for, and benefits all
3 of the following:

4 (1) Developing improved navigations and guidance
5 tools for the state to identify education and career pathways
6 that lead to economic self-sufficiency, including the Alabama
7 College and Career Exploration Tool.

8 (2) Using the data to improve the process used by
9 the Alabama Committee on Credentialing and Career Pathways to
10 identify credentials of value.

11 (3) Determining the return on investment for
12 programs and credentials.

13 (4) Identifying gaps in the availability of high
14 quality credentials in the state.

15 §41-29-355. Alignment of education and workforce
16 credentials.

17 Essential information to maximize informed consumer
18 decisions about all non-degree workforce and occupational
19 credentials and their associated competencies, costs, career
20 pathways, process and outcomes-based quality assurance
21 indicators, assessments that are delivered, issued, funded,
22 authorized, overseen, or governed in the state using funding
23 from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (P.L.
24 113-128) or the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education
25 Act of 2006 (P.L. 115-224), shall be made publicly available,
26 searchable, comparable, and interoperable using open
27 specifications and linked data formats, including credential

1 transparency description language specifications and the
2 annual publication of all educational and occupational
3 credentials, and their associated competencies, to the Alabama
4 Credential Registry.

5 (1) The format and specifications for making all
6 educational and occupational credentials and their associated
7 competencies public, open, and interoperable shall be approved
8 by the committee, be aligned with widely recognized and
9 adopted standards, and allow for open access across sectors
10 and platforms. The information shall be human readable,
11 machine-actionable, current, accurate, and maintained on the
12 Alabama Credential Registry and the website of the credential
13 provider. The requirements may be met through utilization of
14 the credential transparency description language, as approved
15 by the committee.

16 (2) The committee shall coordinate the requirements
17 of this section to ensure that all required data collected
18 through the Alabama Credential Registry is made public in
19 required formats on the Alabama Credential Registry.

20 (3) The committee shall coordinate a credential
21 transparency advisory group with the Department of Early
22 Childhood Education, State Department of Education, Alabama
23 Commission on Higher Education, Alabama Community College
24 System, Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, State
25 Department of Human Resources, and any other entity identified
26 by the Governor to have responsibility over non-degree
27 credentials and funded through the Workforce Innovation and

1 Opportunity Act (P.L. 113-128) or the Carl D. Perkins Career
2 and Technical Education Act of 2006 (P.L. 115-224). The
3 credential transparency advisory group shall be chaired by the
4 Governor, or his or her designee. The committee and the
5 transparency advisory group shall identify the set of specific
6 data elements that shall be made public for credentials, and
7 shall establish time lines, processes, and technical
8 assistance resources to ensure that data requirements are met.
9 Data requirements shall be informed by benchmarks developed by
10 the Alabama Committee on Credentialing and Career Pathways.

11 §41-29-356.

12 (a) All data published to the Alabama Credential
13 Registry, in the required open formats and with the data
14 elements described in this division, shall be fully available
15 to the public for open use. The data required under this
16 division shall not include personally identifiable
17 information.

18 (b) On or before January 1, 2022, secondary and
19 postsecondary career and technical education credentials
20 funded through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical
21 Education Act of 2006 (P.L. 115-224) and programs listed on
22 the eligible training provider list funded through the
23 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (P.L. 113-128), shall
24 be registered to the compendium of valuable credentials
25 adopted by the Alabama Committee on Credentialing and Career
26 Pathways and aligned to the Alabama Committee on Credentialing

1 and Career Pathways statewide and regional lists of in-demand
2 jobs and career pathways.

3 §41-20-357.

4 All credential and competency data published to the
5 Alabama Credential Registry shall satisfy the requirements of
6 this division on, or before, January 1, 2022.

7 Section 2. This act shall become effective on the
8 first day of the third month following its passage and
9 approval by the Governor, or its otherwise becoming law.