

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA  
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE  
FIRST SESSION

**LEGISLATIVE BILL 648**

Introduced by McDonnell, 5.

Read first time January 18, 2023

Committee:

1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to education; to amend sections 79-2302,  
2 79-2303, 79-2304, and 79-2305, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska;  
3 to change provisions relating to legislative intent to appropriate  
4 funding for assistance to institutions that offer high school  
5 equivalency programs; to provide powers and duties to the State  
6 Department of Education relating to the development of a workforce  
7 diploma program as prescribed; to harmonize provisions; to repeal  
8 the original sections; and to declare an emergency.  
9 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. Section 79-2302, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
2 amended to read:

3 79-2302 The purpose of the Diploma of High School Equivalency  
4 Assistance Act is to provide assistance to providers ~~institutions~~ which  
5 offer high school equivalency programs in order to defray the costs  
6 associated with participation in such programs.

7 Sec. 2. Section 79-2303, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
8 amended to read:

9 79-2303 For purposes of the Diploma of High School Equivalency  
10 Assistance Act:

11 (1) Fiscal year means a time period commencing on July 1 and ending  
12 on June 30 of the following year;

13 (2) High school equivalency program means a program which is offered  
14 by an institution and provides participants with training and  
15 examinations for a diploma of high school equivalency; ~~and~~

16 (3) Institution means a state agency, a school district as defined  
17 in section 79-101, or a community college area as defined in section  
18 85-1503; ~~and -~~

19 (4) Provider means XX.

20 Sec. 3. Section 79-2304, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
21 amended to read:

22 79-2304 (1) It is the intent of the Legislature to appropriate seven  
23 hundred fifty thousand dollars from the General Fund for fiscal years  
24 2013-14 and 2014-15, and any amount determined by the Legislature for any  
25 fiscal year thereafter, to the State Department of Education for a  
26 workforce diploma program. Such funds shall be used by the department to  
27 provide assistance to providers ~~institutions~~ that offer high school  
28 equivalency programs. Each such provider shall offer adult dropout  
29 recovery services, including recruitment and learning plan development,  
30 and provide proactive coaching and mentoring culminating in qualification  
31 for a high school diploma to eligible individuals. Eligible individuals

1 include adults and out-of-school youths sixteen years of age or older who  
2 are not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under  
3 state law and shall have not previously earned a high school diploma or  
4 high school equivalency diploma. Assistance shall be provided based on  
5 participation in an institution's high school equivalency program as  
6 follows:

7 (2) On or before August 15, 2023, and each year thereafter, the  
8 State Department of Education shall request applications from eligible  
9 program providers to participate in the workforce diploma program.  
10 Applications shall include evidence of the following:

11 (a) Experience providing adult dropout recovery services as  
12 described in subsection (1) of this section;

13 (b) The ability to develop a learning plan that integrates academic  
14 requirements and career goals;

15 (c) A course catalog that includes all of the courses necessary to  
16 meet graduation requirements;

17 (d) The ability to provide:

18 (i) Academic skill intake assessment and transcript evaluation;

19 (ii) Remediation coursework in literacy and numeracy;

20 (iii) A research-validated academic resiliency assessment and  
21 intervention;

22 (iv) Development of employability skills aligned to employer needs;

23 (v) Career pathways coursework;

24 (vi) Preparation for industry-recognized credentials; and

25 (vii) Career placement services; and

26 (e) Accreditation or approval by the State Department of Education  
27 or accreditation by a recognized regional accrediting body or  
28 consolidation thereof.

29 (3) A workforce diploma program may be delivered in a campus-based,  
30 blended, or online modality.

31 (4) On or before September 15, 2023, and each year thereafter, the

1 State Department of Education shall announce any approved program  
2 providers. Each approved program provider shall establish a program and  
3 begin accepting program participants on or before October 15, 2023. The  
4 State Department of Education shall reimburse each approved program  
5 provider participating in the workforce diploma program for the  
6 completion of the following milestones for each program participant:

7 (a) Two hundred fifty dollars for the completion of five credit  
8 hours;

9 (b) Two hundred fifty dollars for the completion of an employability  
10 skills certification program equal to at least ten credit hours;

11 (c) Two hundred fifty dollars for the attainment of an industry  
12 recognized credential requiring up to fifty hours of training;

13 (d) Five hundred dollars for the attainment of an industry  
14 recognized credential requiring fifty-one through one hundred hours of  
15 training;

16 (e) Seven hundred fifty dollars for the attainment of an industry  
17 recognized credential requiring more than one hundred hours of training;  
18 and

19 (f) One thousand dollars for the attainment of a high school  
20 diploma.

21 (5) On or before July 15, 2024, and each year thereafter, each  
22 approved program provider shall report the following information by  
23 fiscal year to the State Department of Education:

24 (a) Total number of program participants who were funded through the  
25 workforce diploma program;

26 (b) Total number of credit hours earned by such program  
27 participants;

28 (c) Total number of employability skills certifications issued to  
29 such program participants;

30 (d) Total number of industry recognized credentials earned by such  
31 program participants for each tier of funding; and

1        (e) Total number of such program participants who earned a high  
2 school diploma.

3        ~~(a) Each such institution shall receive one assistance payment for~~  
4 ~~each participant who enrolled in its high school equivalency program in~~  
5 ~~the most recently completed fiscal year;~~

6        ~~(b) Each such institution shall receive one assistance payment for~~  
7 ~~each enrolled participant who took an initial examination for a diploma~~  
8 ~~of high school equivalency in the most recently completed fiscal year;~~  
9 ~~and~~

10       ~~(c) Each such institution shall receive one assistance payment for~~  
11 ~~each participant not enrolled in the institution's high school~~  
12 ~~equivalency program who took the examination for a diploma of high school~~  
13 ~~equivalency in the most recently completed fiscal year.~~

14       (6) A provider ~~(2) An institution~~ shall receive no additional  
15 assistance for any program participant who failed his or her initial  
16 examination for a diploma of high school equivalency and requires  
17 additional training and testing.

18       Sec. 4. Section 79-2305, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is  
19 amended to read:

20       79-2305 Each provider ~~institution~~ receiving assistance pursuant to  
21 section 79-2304 shall report annually to the State Department of  
22 Education. The report shall give a description of the operation of the  
23 high school equivalency program for which assistance was provided and  
24 shall include information on the following for the most recently  
25 completed fiscal year:

26       (1) The number of diplomas of high school equivalency awarded  
27 pursuant to such high school equivalency program;

28       (2) The number of participants in the high school equivalency  
29 program who moved successfully through the continuum of literacy skill  
30 levels offered by the program;

31       (3) The number of participants completing the high school

1 equivalency program who secured entry-level career path employment;

2 (4) The number of participants completing the high school  
3 equivalency program who went on to postsecondary education or additional  
4 career training; and

5 (5) The number of participants in the high school equivalency  
6 program who were Nebraska residents or enrolled in a postsecondary  
7 educational institution located in Nebraska.

8 Sec. 5. Original sections 79-2302, 79-2303, 79-2304, and 79-2305,  
9 Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, are repealed.

10 Sec. 6. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when  
11 passed and approved according to law.