

2014 -- S 2220

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LC003657
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014

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A N A C T

RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- EMPLOYMENT SECURITY--
GENERAL PROVISIONS

Introduced By: Senators DaPonte, Gallo, Ciccone, DiPalma, and Ottiano

Date Introduced: January 30, 2014

Referred To: Senate Finance

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Legislative findings. --The legislature finds that training and education is
2 vitally important in the development of skilled workers and the promotion of an international
3 competitive economy. It is the intent of the legislature to ensure that all state citizens are provided
4 with the opportunity to succeed and that no workers are abandoned in their pursuit of excellence
5 in training and education. It is the further intent of the legislature to build a highly skilled and
6 globally competitive workforce by supporting the movement of low-skilled workers into average-
7 skilled jobs and moving average-skilled workers into high-skilled jobs to achieve a world class
8 competitive workforce that is sustainable through the coming decades. The legislature intends,
9 through the establishment of a lifelong learning program, to address the challenge of providing
10 low-skilled workers with postsecondary education and training and ultimately achieving
11 excellence in all sectors of our workforce and economy. The legislature intends the lifelong
12 learning program to develop partnerships and mechanisms through which:

13 (1) Workers take responsibility for advancing in their careers and improving their
14 economic future by investing their own funds in their training and education;

15 (2) Employers promote the success of their businesses, workers, and communities by
16 investing in their workers' lifelong learning accounts;

17 (3) Educational and training institutions promote the establishment of lifelong learning
18 accounts to equip students and their employers with a means to meet the financial demands of

1 higher education tuition costs and the competitive needs of industries;

2 (4) State and local government institutions provide the infrastructure, incentives, and
3 proactive support for employees, employers, and institutions to invest in lifelong learning
4 accounts; and

5 (5) Financial institutions and nonprofit organizations invest their resources to provide the
6 initial web of support to establish pilot projects, foster program development, assist in impact
7 evaluation, and assist in migrating the program achievements and best practices across other
8 communities and industries in the United States.

9 SECTION 2. Chapter 28-42 of the General Laws entitled "Employment Security -
10 General Provisions" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

11 **28-42-85.1. Lifelong learning program.** – (a) Lifelong learning program is established
12 within the state workforce investment board to provide the opportunity for employees, with the
13 support of their employers, to create educational savings accounts that may be used to fund
14 approved education and training. In operating the program, the board:

15 (1) May partner with, and coordinate the voluntary alignment of services with, financial
16 institutions and other public, private, and nonprofit organizations in order to enable low-wage
17 workers to attain high-skilled and high-wage jobs in their communities;

18 (2) Must work with its partners to:

19 (i) Establish the policies, rules, and procedures, including, but not limited to, standards
20 for fund management and for approving career development plans and education and training that
21 support the operation of the program;

22 (ii) Ensure the program is marketed to various geographic areas and industry sectors of
23 the state, as well as to low-wage workers, their employers, and the communities in which they
24 reside; and

25 (iii) Help partners coordinate new career counseling services with, existing online and
26 other providers, including those provided by the state human resource investment council;

27 (3) May work with financial institutions to encourage their full engagement in:

28 (i) The management functions of the program, including managing lifelong learning
29 accounts for individual employers and their respective employees consistent with program
30 requirements and guidelines;

31 (ii) Adding value to the program through the provision of financial literacy and career
32 counseling; and

33 (iii) Aligning their activities under a consolidated partnership, which may include the
34 designation of one fund manager to streamline the establishment and management of the

1 program; and

2 (4) May develop program policies and system options that will lead the program to
3 become self-sustaining. This may include establishment of fees for participation, system fees for
4 the administration of accounts, and set-up fees; and transactions fees for deposits and
5 disbursements, career counseling fees, sponsorship fees, and other fees as determined appropriate
6 by the board.

7 (b) Definitions. As used in this section:

8 (1) "Approved career development plan" means an employee's career development plan
9 that is approved by the program managers and contains the necessary information to determine if
10 expenditures are in alignment with program criteria.

11 (2) "Approved education and training" means education, training, and associated costs
12 aligned with an approved career development plan and thus eligible to be funded from a lifelong
13 learning account.

14 (3) "Financial institution" means any federally chartered or state chartered bank, savings
15 bank, or savings and loan association, or credit union.

16 (4) "Lifelong learning accounts" means joint savings accounts that are established by
17 employees and employers to support the education and training of employees and that are aligned
18 with their approved career development plan.

19 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

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RELATING TO LABOR AND LABOR RELATIONS -- EMPLOYMENT SECURITY--
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- 1 This act would establish a lifelong learning program designed to provide employees with
- 2 educational savings accounts to help fund educational programs and training.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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