

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2019

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
College & Workforce Development

**Title:** An act relating to increasing educational and training opportunities for careers in retail.

**Brief Description:** Increasing educational and training opportunities for careers in retail.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Boehnke, Graham, Johnson, J., Leavitt and Sutherland.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

College & Workforce Development: 1/24/22, 1/27/22 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board to consult and engage with stakeholders to identify and make recommendations on strategies to increase education and training for retail workers.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COLLEGE & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Slatter, Chair; Entenman, Vice Chair; Leavitt, Vice Chair; Chambers, Ranking Minority Member; Jacobsen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Paul, Pollet, Sells and Sutherland.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Kraft.

**Staff:** Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

**Background:**

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

### Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board) was created in 1991 to provide planning, coordination, evaluation, monitoring, and policy analysis for the state workforce training system as a whole, and to advise the Governor and the Legislature concerning the training system. It is a tripartite partnership of business, labor, and government with a Governor-appointed board of 11 members.

### National Retail Federation Foundation's RISE Up.

RISE Up is a training and credentialing program that provides foundational employability skills to assist people in getting hired and promoted in the retail industry. The curriculum and exams are industry-recognized and were developed in collaboration with 20 retailers. RISE Up offers four credentials: retail industry fundamentals; customer service and sales; business of retail; and warehouse, inventory, and logistics.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Workforce Board, in consultation with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and statewide retail employer organizations, must:

- identify core skills needed for employment in the retail industry;
- identify existing courses, educational pathways, and apprenticeships for students and entry-level job seekers to gain the core skills identified;
- map educational pathways and apprenticeships that retail workers may use to pursue promotions and job advancement opportunities;
- identify where there are gaps in educational courses, trainings, and apprenticeships for retail workers; and
- identify in-demand, higher wage, nonindustry specific professions within the retail industry that experience and education in retail may lead to.

The Workforce Board must then use this information to engage stakeholders, including the SBCTC, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Corrections, the Employment Security Department, the Career Connected Learning Cross-Agency Work Group, and statewide retail employer organizations to make recommendations to the Legislature on the following:

- strategies to develop additional courses, pathways, and apprenticeships to make retail certifications and credentials available for job seekers and current retail employees;
- strategies to build a network for students and job seekers who complete retail certification courses to connect with potential employers;
- options for engaging and partnering with retail employers to provide courses to incumbent front-line workers for the purpose of up-skilling and promotions, including in-demand, higher paid, nonindustry specific positions within the retail industry; and
- options for increasing training and job opportunities in the retail industry for underserved communities and previously incarcerated individuals.

The Workforce Board must submit two reports to the Legislature: a progress report by December 1, 2022; and a final report with recommendations by December 1, 2023. The requirements expire July 1, 2024.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill added "apprenticeships" to areas where education, courses, and trainings were being identified or recommended. In addition, the Workforce Board must identify in-demand, higher wage, nonindustry specific professions within the retail industry that experience and education in retail may lead to. In-demand, higher wage, nonindustry specific professions may also be included in the options for engaging and partnering with retail employers to provide courses to front-line workers.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Preliminary fiscal note available. New fiscal note requested on January 27, 2022.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

### **Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The retail industry is vital to the state's economy and was another workforce sector impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The retail industry accounts for 42 percent of the state's revenue, and is the third largest employer in the state after government and health care. The intent is to build off the excellent work of career connected learning and other programs in the K-12 system. There is not enough focus on retail as a career or for students re-entering the workforce. The focus is on building core skills versus the actual jobs. According to the Employment Security Department, customer service skills are the single most important skill employers are looking for. Many people do not have the entry-level skills needed to get employment. Small retail employers with less than 50 employees would benefit greatly if the state provides a pipeline of employees. An additional goal is to promote the upward mobility of front-line workers. Individuals could discover pathways they have not yet dreamed of. A few programs available at the community and technical colleges are customer service management, electronic commerce, marketing, and merchandising. This also might be a good option for incarcerated individuals to help them secure jobs upon their release.

Grocery workers represent 105,000 of the retail workers and are mostly unionized. During the pandemic, grocery workers have been vital to keeping the community fed and safe. They deserve pathways into better careers and higher wage jobs. Grocery workers are more likely to be workers of color, immigrants, and women who do not hold a bachelor's degree.

There is a retail management certificate program offered through a number of community colleges across the United States. It is an eight course program designed specifically for growing retail management skills and scholarships are provided. Many individuals start out in their first job, such as bagging groceries, and promote up into positions such as directors, managers, and other senior executive positions at the same company. Educational pathways are a retention and recruiting tool. Individuals want to work for companies that have paths to promotion and better pay. Workers are required to have refined technical and people skills and work in an industry that is ever evolving. Retail may be the destination or it might be the journey.

Two recommended changes are: (1) to call out registered apprenticeships because it adds a tool to connect employees to employers; and (2) to mention in-demand and high wage jobs.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Matt Boehnke, prime sponsor; Rose Gundersen, Washington Retail Association; Carolyn McKinnon, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Evan Woods, WeTrain Washington; Cristina Mateo, Washington Build Back Black Alliance; Tammie Hetrick, Washington Food Industry Association; and Tyler Myers, The Myers Group, LLC.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.