**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 53, TITLE 59 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO THE STATE BOARD FOR TECHNICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION, BY ADDING SECTION 59-53-45, TO PROVIDE FOR A WORKFORCE DIPLOMA PROGRAM, TO PROVIDE CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM, TO PROVIDE FOR THE REIMBURSEMENT OF PROVIDERS, TO PROVIDE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS, AND TO DEFINE NECESSARY TERMS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Article 1, Chapter 53, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 59-53-45. (A) For the purposes of this section:

(1) ‘Cohort year’ means each twelve-month period following the first day that students may enroll in the program.

(2) ‘Cost per graduate’ means the total program funding reimbursed to a provider divided by the total number of graduates for a cohort year.

(3) ‘Eligible program provider’ means a public, nonprofit, or private regionally accredited, diploma‑granting institution with at least two years of experience providing adult high school dropout recovery services, including recruitment, learning plan development, and proactive coaching and mentoring culminating in an accredited high school diploma.

(4) ‘Eligible student’ means an individual twenty-two years of age or older who is a resident of the State and who does not have an accredited high school diploma.

(5) ‘Graduation rate’ means the total number of graduates for a cohort year divided by all of the eligible students for the cohort year for whom a provider has received funding. The graduation rate shall be calculated one cohort year in arrears.

(B) Annually, on or before August fifteenth, the board shall issue a request for qualifications for eligible program providers to participate in a workforce diploma program. The criteria for qualified providers must include the ability to:

(1) provide academic skill intake assessment and transcript evaluations;

(2) develop a learning plan that integrates academic requirements and career goals;

(3) provide a course catalog that includes all courses necessary to meet South Carolina’s high school graduation requirements;

(4) provide remediation coursework in literacy and numeracy;

(5) provide employability skills development aligned to employer needs;

(6) provide career pathways coursework;

(7) provide preparation for industry‑recognized credentials; and

(8) provide career placement services.

(C) The board shall annually publish on its website all approved eligible program providers no later than October first, with programs starting no later than November first. Once approved, an eligible program provider shall maintain its approval without reapplying annually so long as the eligible program provider has not been removed from the approved provider list in accordance with subsection (F)(3).

(D)(1) The board shall reimburse approved eligible program providers for the completion of the following milestones for each pupil:

(a) two hundred fifty dollars for the completion of each half credit;

(b) two hundred fifty dollars for the completion of an employability skills certification program equal to at least one Carnegie unit;

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

(d) five hundred dollars for the attainment of an industry‑recognized credential requiring between fifty-one and one hundred hours of training;

(e) seven hundred fifty dollars for the attainment of an industry‑recognized credential requiring more than one hundred hours of training; and

(f) one thousand dollars for the attainment of an accredited high school diploma.

(2) Eligible program providers shall submit monthly invoices to the board no later than the tenth calendar day of each month for milestones met during the previous calendar month.

(3) The board shall reimburse qualified providers in the order in which invoices are submitted until all pilot funds are exhausted.

(E) Annually, no later than July fifteenth, each eligible program provider shall report the following to the board:

(1) the total number of eligible students who have been funded through the program;

(2) the total number of credits earned;

(3) the total number of employability skills certifications issued;

(4) the total number of industry‑recognized credentials earned for each tier of funding; and

(5) the total number of graduates.

(F)(1) The board shall review the reports from each eligible program provider to determine if the programs offered by each eligible program provider are achieving at least minimum program performance standards, including if the:

(a) program attained a minimum of a fifty percent graduation rate; and

(b) cost per graduate was seven thousand dollars or less.

(2) The board shall place an eligible program provider that does not meet the program performance indicators in item (1) of this subsection on probationary status for the remainder of the fiscal year.

(3) An eligible program provider that does not meet minimum performance standards for two consecutive years shall be removed from the approved provider list.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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