**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, TO ENACT THE “CONSTRUCTION CAREER PATHWAY ACT” BY ADDING ARTICLE 30 TO CHAPTER 53, TITLE 59 SO AS TO DEFINE NECESSARY TERMINOLOGY, TO PROVIDE A COLLABORATIVE DESIGN OF A CAREER PATHWAY FOR STUDENTS WITHIN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TO CONNECT SCHOOL DISTRICTS, TECHNICAL COLLEGES, VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS, JUNIOR COLLEGES, AND FOUR‑YEAR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION WITH ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS, LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, AND REGIONAL CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS IN A MANNER TO ALLOW A STUDENT TO EARN INCOME WHILE PROGRESSING ALONG THE CAREER PATHWAY, TO SPECIFY REQUIREMENTS OF THE PROGRAM, AND TO PROVIDE THAT THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE, SHALL POST CERTAIN INFORMATION CONCERNING THE CAREER PATHWAY ON THE STATE‑PROVIDED, FREE ONLINE RESOURCE.

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds that construction plays a vital role in South Carolina’s economy and that the construction industry in this State is flourishing both in residential and commercial markets, with employers distributed across the State; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds that growth in construction benefits suppliers, tradesmen, and other businesses in which construction occurs; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds that the promise and challenge of sustaining growth in its construction industry presents special difficulties due to the scope and diversity of the industry, and that its workers need stronger foundational knowledge, specialized skills, portable production skills, as well as flexibility and adaptability in work habits; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds that because construction provides a dynamic and evolving economic engine for the Palmetto State, the challenges in preparing a pipeline of skilled employees to work in the construction industry must be addressed, and current and future South Carolina workers must be aware of the opportunities in the industry and the career pathway to achieve employment in the construction industry. Now, therefore,

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

SECTION 1. This act must be known and may be cited as the “Construction Career Pathway Act”.

SECTION 2. Chapter 53, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Article 30

Construction Career Pathway

Section 59‑53‑3510. As used in this article:

(1) ‘Board’ means the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education.

(2) ‘Career pathway’ means a series of connected educational and training strategies and support services that enable individuals to secure industry‑relevant skills and certification where applicable, and to obtain employment within an occupational area and to advance to higher levels of future education and employment.

(3) ‘Construction industry’ comprises a wide range of activities involving construction, alteration, and repair of commercial structures and residential structures, bridge erection, roadway paving, excavations, demolitions, and large scale painting jobs, among many others.

(4) ‘Construction industry partnership’ means a collaboration of engineers and contractors, in partnership with public workforce development, economic development, business and industry, and educational partners, to ensure that workers are prepared to meet the growing demands of the construction industry within a geographic area.

(5) ‘Stackable certificates’ means a sequence of credentials, each of which is recognized by employers and provides a gateway to employment and matriculation into a technical degree or advanced study in a field.

Section 59‑53‑3520. (A) No later than the 2016‑2017 academic year, the board, after consulting with the state’s technical colleges and area vocational schools, and in collaboration with the Department of Employment and Workforce, the Commission on Higher Education, the Department of Education, the Economic Development Coordinating Council, and the State Council on Vocational‑Technical Education shall design a career pathway for students within the construction sector. The construction career pathway must connect school districts, technical colleges, vocational schools, junior colleges, and four‑year institutions of higher education with adult education programs, local workforce development programs, and regional construction sector partnerships, and will allow a student to earn income while progressing along the career pathway.

(B) The construction career pathway must include industry‑validated stackable certifications and multiple entry and exit points that allow students of all ages to seek additional opportunities in the construction sector. The construction career pathway designed by the board must include, but need not be limited to:

(1) alignment with the skills and requirements that state and local construction sector employers, through construction sector partnerships, determine are necessary for career progression in high‑demand occupations within the construction sector;

(2) a full range of middle school, secondary, adult education, and postsecondary education options, with a nonduplicative, clearly articulated course progression from one level of instruction to the next, with opportunities to earn postsecondary credits, maximize credit for prior learning, and secure industry‑validated credentials;

(3) technical skill assessments at multiple points in the construction career pathway that lead to industry certifications or other value in employment, including advanced placement into a higher level of training;

(4) academic and career counseling resources, best practices in wraparound support services, particularly at transition points along the construction career pathway, and support and development of individual career and academic plans; and

(5) curriculum and instructional strategies that are appropriate for adult students and that embed learning and skill building in a work‑related context.

Section 59‑53‑3530. After the design of the construction career pathway provided in this article is complete, the Commission on Higher Education, in collaboration with the Department of Employment and Workforce, shall post information concerning the career pathway on the state‑provided, free online resource commonly referred to as ‘CollegeInSouthCarolina.gov’. This resource must include information concerning:

(1) construction industry career awareness;

(2) salary and wage information for construction industry careers;

(3) the construction industry employment forecast;

(4) information on programs within the construction career pathway, services provided, and financial aid opportunities for students; and

(5) online student support services.”

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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