AN ACT Relating to helping former foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness access and complete registered apprenticeships; and adding a new chapter to Title 28C RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. Sec. 1. (1)(a) The legislature finds that in 2007 with creation of the passport to college promise program, this state took a significant step toward providing higher education opportunities to youth in and alumni of foster care. The passport to college promise program not only provides financial aid to former foster youth but, just as important, it recognizes the critical role of wraparound services and provides early outreach to foster care youth regarding postsecondary higher educational opportunities. Since 2007, the passport to college promise program has increased the number of former foster youth enrolling in higher education and working toward college degrees.

(b) Recognizing the success of creating pathways for foster youth to access higher education, the legislature now seeks to create an additional postsecondary option through access to registered apprenticeships. Former foster and homeless youth face critical hurdles to accessing apprenticeships. The first is a lack of information regarding preparation for and enrolling in
apprenticeships. The second is finding the financial resources to begin and continue in an apprenticeship. As a result of the unique hurdles and challenges that face youth in and alumni of foster care and homeless and former homeless youth, a disproportionate number of them are part of society's large group of marginalized youth.

(c) The legislature reiterates its earlier recognition of the critical role education plays in improving outcomes for youth in and alumni of foster care and homeless and former homeless youth, as well as the key role played by wraparound services in providing continuity and seamless transitions to postsecondary credential programs. With the creation of a parallel passport for registered apprenticeships, including wraparound services, the legislature strives to make Washington the leader in the nation with respect to foster and homeless youth graduating from high school and enrolling in and achieving a postsecondary credential.

(2) The legislature intends to create the passport to apprenticeship opportunities program. The program will have two primary components:

(a) Significantly increasing outreach to foster and homeless youth between the ages of thirteen and eighteen regarding the registered apprenticeship opportunities available to them and how to apply; and

(b) Providing financial assistance to former foster and homeless youth to meet registered apprenticeship entrance requirements and occupational-specific costs, and providing supportive services to help them register for and complete an apprenticeship.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 2. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Apprentice" means a person enrolled in a state-approved or reciprocally recognized apprenticeship program.

(2) "Apprenticeship" means an apprenticeship training program approved or recognized by the state apprenticeship and training council.

(3) "Department" means the employment security department.

(4) "Occupational-specific costs" means the costs associated with entering an apprenticeship, including but not limited to, fees, tuition for classes, work clothes, rain gear, boots, occupation-
specific tools, plus the costs of reasonable transportation expenses incurred by an apprentice.

(5) "Preapprentice" means a person enrolled in a state-approved or reciprocally recognized preapprenticeship training program.

(6) "Preapprenticeship" means a preapprenticeship training program approved or recognized by the state apprenticeship and training council.

(7) "Program" means the passport to apprenticeship opportunities program created in this chapter.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. The passport to apprenticeship opportunities program is created. The purpose of the program is to:

(1) Encourage current and former foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness to prepare for, enroll in, and successfully complete an apprenticeship; and

(2) Provide current and former foster youth and youth experiencing homelessness with the planning, information, institutional support, and direct financial resources necessary for them to succeed in a preapprenticeship or apprenticeship.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. (1) The department shall design and, to the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose, implement, a program of assistance for residents who emancipated from the state foster care system after having spent at least one day in care or who experienced homelessness for one day between the ages of thirteen and eighteen.

(2) The department shall convene and consult with an advisory committee to assist with program design and implementation. The committee shall include but not be limited to former foster and homeless youth and their advocates, public and private agencies that assist current and former foster youth in their transition to adulthood, the state board for community and technical colleges, the state workforce training and education coordinating board, and the state apprenticeship and training council.

(3) To the extent that funds have been appropriated for this purpose, an applicant is eligible for assistance under this section if the applicant:

(a) Emancipated from foster care on or after January 1, 2018, after having spent at least one day in foster care subsequent to the applicant's thirteenth birthday, or who experienced homelessness for
at least one day after age thirteen and prior to the applicant's eighteenth birthday;

(b) Is a resident student, as defined in RCW 28B.15.012(2);

(c) Is registered with or will register on at least a half-time basis with an apprenticeship or preapprenticeship in Washington state by the age of twenty-one; and

(d) Is making satisfactory progress toward the completion of an apprenticeship or preapprenticeship, if receiving financial assistance as provided in subsection (4) of this section.

(4) An eligible applicant may receive financial assistance through the program for a maximum of six years after first enrolling with a registered apprenticeship or preapprenticeship or until the applicant turns age twenty-six, whichever occurs first.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. (1) To the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose, the department, with input from the state apprenticeship and training council and the department of labor and industries, shall contract through a request for proposals process with at least one nongovernmental entity with each of the following specialties:

(a) Education coordination for youth who are dependent pursuant to chapter 13.34 RCW, birth to twelfth grade in Washington state, with demonstrated success in working with foster care youth and assisting foster care youth in receiving appropriate educational services, including enrollment, accessing school-based services, reducing out-of-school discipline interventions, and attaining high school graduation; and

(b) Providing quality training, employment navigation, and supportive services to disadvantaged populations seeking to complete apprenticeships and preapprenticeships.

(2) The nongovernmental entity or entities selected under subsection (1)(a) of this section must engage in a public-private partnership with the department and are responsible for raising a portion of the funds needed for service delivery, administration, and evaluation.

(3) The nongovernmental entity or entities selected under subsection (1)(b) of this section shall provide supportive services to apprentices and preapprentices, and disburse the state financial assistance in section 4 of this act to meet apprenticeship and
preapprenticeship entrance requirements and occupational-specific costs.

(4) The nongovernmental entities selected under subsection (1) of this section shall:

(a) Coordinate together to provide transition planning to foster and homeless youth in Washington state beginning at age thirteen that includes:

(i) Comprehensive information regarding postsecondary apprenticeship and preapprenticeship opportunities including, but not limited to, transportation, housing, and other logistical considerations;

(ii) How and when to apply to registered apprenticeships and recognized preapprenticeships;

(iii) What courses to take to prepare the particular youth to succeed at their postsecondary plans; and

(iv) Social, community, educational, logistical, and other issues that frequently impact apprentices and their success rates; and

(b) Coordinate their outreach efforts with the private agency performing outreach for the passport to college promise program under chapter 28B.117 RCW.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 6. Effective operation of the passport to apprenticeship opportunities program requires early and accurate identification of former foster and homeless youth so that they can be linked to the financial and other assistance that will help them succeed in an apprenticeship. The department of social and health services and department of commerce shall devise and implement procedures for efficiently, promptly, and accurately identifying applicants who are eligible for services under section 4 of this act, and for sharing that information with the department. The procedures shall include appropriate safeguards for consent by the applicant before disclosure.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 7. (1) To the extent funds are appropriated for this purpose, the department, with input from the state apprenticeship and training council and the foster care partnership, shall develop and maintain an internet web site and outreach program to serve as a comprehensive portal for foster and homeless youth in Washington state to obtain information regarding apprenticeships and preapprenticeships including, but not necessarily limited to:
(a) Academic, social, family, financial, and logistical information important to successful application and completion of an apprenticeship;
(b) How and when to obtain and complete apprenticeship applications;
(c) What academic subject matter prerequisites, if any, are generally required for acceptance to an apprenticeship; and
(d) Detailed sources of assistance likely available to eligible former foster and homeless youth, including the aid provided by this chapter.

(2) The department shall determine whether to design, build, and operate the outreach program and web site directly or to use, support, and modify existing web sites created by government or nongovernmental entities for a similar purpose.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 8. The legislature strongly recommends that the entities selected in section 5 of this act, the entities with which the department of social and health services contracts or collaborates to provide educational support services and educational outcomes for students who are dependent under chapter 13.34 RCW, and the private agency performing outreach for the passport to college promise program under chapter 28B.117 RCW, coordinate on technological models to keep in constant touch with the students they serve and keep these students engaged.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 9. This act may be known and cited as the passport to apprenticeship opportunities act.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 10. Sections 1 through 9 of this act constitute a new chapter in Title 28C RCW.

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