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HOUSE BILL NO. 256

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 11, 2022

A BILL to amend and reenact § 23.1-627.3 of the Code of Virginia, relating to New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Program; eligible institutions; contracts.

Patron—Simonds

Referred to Committee on Education

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 23.1-627.3 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 23.1-627.3. New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Fund and Program established; administration.**

A. There is hereby created in the state treasury a special nonreverting fund to be known as the New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Fund. The Fund shall be established on the books of the Comptroller. All moneys appropriated by the General Assembly, and from any other sources, public or private, shall be paid into the state treasury and credited to the Fund. Interest earned on moneys in the Fund shall remain in the Fund and be credited to it. Any moneys remaining in the Fund, including interest thereon, at the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the Fund. Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely for the purposes of disbursing moneys to eligible institutions for the award of grants pursuant to the Program. Expenditures and disbursements from the Fund shall be made by the State Treasurer on warrants issued by the Comptroller upon written request signed by the director of the Council.

B. There is hereby established a New Economy Workforce Credential Grant Program for the purpose of disbursing moneys from the Fund to eligible institutions for the award of grants to benefit students pursuant to this article.

C. The Council shall administer the Program and shall carry out the goals and purposes of the Program set forth in this article. In administering the Program, the Council (i) shall require eligible institutions to provide student-specific data and make final decisions on any dispute between eligible institutions and grant recipients; (ii) shall undertake periodic assessments of the overall success of the Program and recommend modifications, interventions, and other actions based on such assessment; and (iii) may adopt such regulations for the administration of the Program as it deems necessary and appropriate.

D. The Council shall instruct the Comptroller to annually disburse moneys to eligible institutions on a first-come, first-served basis as eligible students enroll in noncredit workforce training programs, giving priority to noncredit workforce training programs in high-demand fields in which employer demand is currently unmet by the available workforce. No more than one-quarter of the moneys in the Fund shall be disbursed annually to any eligible institution. The Council shall set forth the procedure by which eligible institutions shall notify the Council when eligible students enroll in noncredit workforce training programs identified by the governing board of the eligible institution pursuant to subsection E.

E. The Board shall make recommendations to eligible institutions to help determine high-demand fields for which noncredit workforce training programs may be offered pursuant to the Program. The governing board of each eligible institution shall determine the noncredit workforce training programs offered pursuant to the Program. *Eligible institutions shall be permitted to contract with noncredit workforce training programs and providers to carry out the purposes of this article, provided that the instructors of such programs and providers are certified and are compensated by the eligible institution.*