

[First Reprint]

**ASSEMBLY, No. 6230**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**219th LEGISLATURE**

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 13, 2021

**Sponsored by:**

**Assemblyman DANIEL R. BENSON**

**District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)**

**Assemblyman PEDRO MEJIA**

**District 32 (Bergen and Hudson)**

**Assemblyman ANDREW ZWICKER**

**District 16 (Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex and Somerset)**

**Co-Sponsored by:**

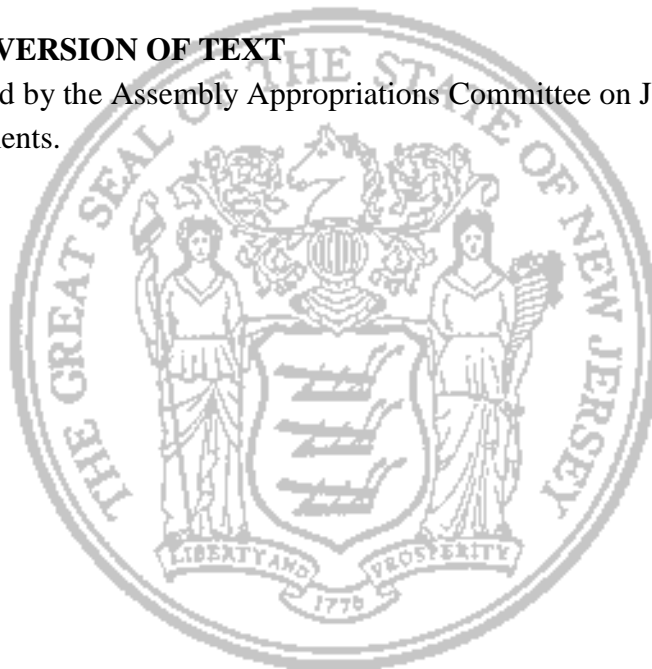
**Assemblywomen Vainieri Huttle, Lampitt and Assemblyman Calabrese**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes Direct Support Professional Career Development Program; appropriates \$1,000,000.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As reported by the Assembly Appropriations Committee on January 6, 2022, with amendments.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/10/2022)**

1 AN ACT concerning the establishment of a <sup>1</sup>**[center]** program<sup>1</sup> for  
 2 direct support professionals by the New Jersey Community  
 3 College Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development,  
 4 supplementing chapter 64A of Title 18A of the New Jersey  
 5 Statutes, and making an appropriation.

6  
 7 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*  
 8 *of New Jersey:*

9  
 10 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

11 a. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities strive  
 12 to live active, engaged lives within the community.

13 b. Community inclusion is shown to promote the best outcomes  
 14 and quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental  
 15 disabilities.

16 c. Direct support professionals (DSPs) provide critical services  
 17 and supports for people with intellectual and developmental  
 18 disabilities and without these services community inclusion for  
 19 many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities would  
 20 not be possible.

21 d. <sup>1</sup>DSPs support individuals with intellectual and  
 22 developmental disabilities in their own homes, family homes,  
 23 provider-managed residences and programs, in the community, and  
 24 workplaces. They support individuals with the activities related to  
 25 daily living, including personal care, health and well-being,  
 26 behavioral and mental health, relationship building, home and  
 27 community participation, achievement of goals, and a variety of  
 28 other individual needs. They require the ethics, skills, and  
 29 competency to effectively provide these supports.

30 e.<sup>1</sup> However, the system of services and supports that people  
 31 with intellectual and developmental disabilities rely on for  
 32 becoming contributing citizens in their communities is facing an  
 33 ongoing workforce crisis; harming the ability of people with  
 34 intellectual and developmental disabilities to access services. This  
 35 strain is further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

36 <sup>1</sup>**[e.] f.**<sup>1</sup> The DSP workforce crisis, that is evident across the  
 37 nation, is characterized in several ways, including high turnover,  
 38 difficulty recruiting, and no discernable career path, all of which  
 39 threatens the number and quality of available services and supports  
 40 for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

41 <sup>1</sup>**[f.** This crisis calls for the establishment of a career path  
 42 aligned with ongoing professional development] **g.** The Centers for  
 43 Medicare and Medicaid Services has awarded Money Follows the  
 44 Person funds (MFP) to the Department of Human Services,

**EXPLANATION** – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is  
 not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

<sup>1</sup>Assembly AAP committee amendments adopted January 6, 2022.

1 Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) to address the DSP  
2 crisis through a process facilitated by DDD and the Boggs Center  
3 on Developmental Disabilities, Rutgers, Robert Wood Johnson  
4 Medical School to establish core competencies for New Jersey and  
5 related training. The federal MFP funding and this act represents a  
6 recognition of the need for a Direct Support Professional Career  
7 Development Program aligned with national and State core  
8 competencies<sup>1</sup> in order to instill competence, confidence, and  
9 investment in the workforce that contributes to the well-being and  
10 quality of life of people with intellectual and developmental  
11 disabilities by providing an opportunity for career development,  
12 advancement, and learning new skills.

13 <sup>1</sup>**[g.]** h. Efforts of the Direct Support Professional Career  
14 Development Program will be aligned with the competencies  
15 developed and adopted by New Jersey.

16 i.<sup>1</sup> The Direct Support Professional Career Development  
17 <sup>1</sup>**[Center] Program**<sup>1</sup> shall have two objectives. First, the <sup>1</sup>**[Center]**  
18 program<sup>1</sup> shall conduct a pilot that focuses on DSP recruitment  
19 <sup>1</sup>**[and retention for students “at-risk” of not completing a traditional**  
20 **high school program and, as such, not only will benefit people with**  
21 **intellectual and developmental disabilities but also “at-risk”**  
22 **students who otherwise may not have access to a career**  
23 **opportunity]** of high school or county college students, but may  
24 also be open to individuals pursuing a change in career, and oversee  
25 implementation of one-year paid fellowship opportunities. The  
26 program shall be responsible for determining and evaluating the  
27 criteria for fellowship recipients, and selecting new fellows on an  
28 annual basis<sup>1</sup>.

29 <sup>1</sup>**[h.]** j.<sup>1</sup> The <sup>1</sup>second objective of the<sup>1</sup> Direct Support  
30 Professional Career Development <sup>1</sup>**[Center] Program**<sup>1</sup> shall <sup>1</sup>be to<sup>1</sup>  
31 provide support to existing and new DSPs with <sup>1</sup>**[incentives to**  
32 **remain in the field and further]** educational programming and  
33 experience that help them build skills and competency while  
34 working in the field and further<sup>1</sup> their <sup>1</sup>**[education] professional**  
35 development<sup>1</sup> .  
36

37 2. The Direct Support Professional Career Development  
38 <sup>1</sup>**[Center] Program**<sup>1</sup> shall be established <sup>1</sup>**[at] by**<sup>1</sup> the New Jersey  
39 Community College Consortium for Workforce and Economic  
40 Development <sup>1</sup>**[in partnership with a trade association serving**  
41 **organizations that employ direct support professionals]** at one of its  
42 Centers for Workforce Innovation as part of the New Jersey  
43 Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative. The program shall also  
44 establish two additional program sites, one located at a county  
45 college in the northern region of the State, and one located at a  
46 county college in the southern region of the State. The Secretary of

1 Higher Education, in consultation with the New Jersey Council of  
2 County Colleges, shall select the location for the program's  
3 additional sites.

4 The program shall be guided by an advisory council that includes  
5 representatives from target school districts, county colleges, and  
6 One Stop Career Centers, and representatives from each of the  
7 following stakeholder groups: people with disabilities, family  
8 members of people with disabilities, direct support professionals,  
9 frontline supervisors, and service provider leadership. The advisory  
10 council shall work in partnership with the Division of  
11 Developmental Disabilities in the Department of Human Services  
12 and the Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, Rutgers,  
13 Robert Wood Johnson Medical School.

14 The Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the  
15 President of the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, shall  
16 appoint the members of the advisory council. Members of the  
17 advisory council shall serve without compensation, but shall be  
18 reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses<sup>1</sup>.

19 It shall be the purpose of the <sup>1</sup>**[center]** program<sup>1</sup> to provide a  
20 potential career path to <sup>1</sup>**[high school students at-risk of failing to**  
21 **graduate]** individuals interested in human services and allied health  
22 career fields<sup>1</sup> in addition to existing direct support professionals,  
23 thereby assisting with recruitment and retention of this critical  
24 workforce.

25 The <sup>1</sup>**[center]** program<sup>1</sup>, through partnerships with local school  
26 districts, <sup>1</sup>county colleges, and One Stop Career Centers,<sup>1</sup> shall  
27 identify and recruit <sup>1</sup>**[high school students "at risk" of not**  
28 **graduating from high school who have not pursued vocational**  
29 **education or any other alternative education program, and]**  
30 individuals<sup>1</sup> who are interested in learning about and serving people  
31 with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The <sup>1</sup>**[center]**  
32 program<sup>1</sup> shall provide participating students with a <sup>1</sup>**[two-year]**  
33 one-year fellowship<sup>1</sup> program that offers mentorship and training  
34 regarding the responsibilities of direct support professionals and a  
35 potential job opportunity upon graduation. The program shall  
36 provide online training in addition to on-site training and  
37 mentorship with experienced direct support professionals employed  
38 by <sup>1</sup>**[participating]** collaborating<sup>1</sup> agencies that serve individuals  
39 with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

40 <sup>1</sup>**[Upon completion of the program, a participating student shall**  
41 **receive academic credits and the school district at which the student**  
42 **is enrolled shall apply the credits towards the district requirements**  
43 **for high school graduation. The student shall be offered an**  
44 **opportunity to interview for employment as a direct support**  
45 **professional at the agency where the student received on-site**  
46 **training. The agency shall interview the student for a position with**

1 compensation that reflects the experience and training received  
2 through the program.】<sup>1</sup>

3 In addition to <sup>1</sup>【“at risk”】<sup>1</sup> students, the Direct Support  
4 Professional Career Development <sup>1</sup>【Center】 Program<sup>1</sup> shall work  
5 with existing and <sup>1</sup>【future】 potential<sup>1</sup> direct support professionals  
6 to identify their educational goals including credentialing, an  
7 associate’s degree, and a bachelor’s degree.

8 <sup>1</sup>The Direct Support Professional Career Development Program  
9 shall collaborate with local One Stop Career Centers to provide  
10 opportunities for unemployed and underemployed workers to  
11 receive training to pursue employment in the field of Direct  
12 Support.<sup>1</sup>

13

14 3. The Direct Support Professional Career Development  
15 <sup>1</sup>【Center】 Program, and each additional program site,<sup>1</sup> established  
16 pursuant to section 2 of this act shall <sup>1</sup>【employ a career counselor】  
17 provide career counseling<sup>1</sup>.

18 <sup>1</sup>【a.】<sup>1</sup> The career <sup>1</sup>【counselor】 counseling<sup>1</sup> shall provide  
19 ongoing support to participating <sup>1</sup>【high school】<sup>1</sup> students as well as  
20 direct support professionals, including providing the student with  
21 assistance in finding appropriate postsecondary programs <sup>1</sup>, support  
22 with completion of the Direct Support Professional Career  
23 Development Pathway established pursuant to section 4 of this act,<sup>1</sup>  
24 or in connecting the student with a provider agency that serves  
25 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

26 <sup>1</sup>【b. The career counselor shall assist in the establishment of a  
27 Career Development Program pursuant to section 4 of this act.】<sup>1</sup>

28

29 4. <sup>1</sup>【In collaboration with the New Jersey Council of County  
30 Colleges, a Career Development Program is established for new and  
31 existing direct support professionals at the Direct Support  
32 Professional Career Development Center established pursuant to  
33 section 2 of this act. The Career Development Program shall assist  
34 individuals employed as a direct support professional with the  
35 pursuit of a college degree. It shall be the purpose of the Career  
36 Development Program to create a career path for the recruitment  
37 and retention of direct support professionals.

38 The New Jersey Council of County Colleges shall, as part of  
39 New Jersey’s Workforce Development initiative, <sup>1</sup> In collaboration  
40 with the Division of Developmental Disabilities in the Department  
41 of Human Services and entities focused on promoting the self-  
42 determination and full participation of people with disabilities, the  
43 Center of Workforce Innovation, and each additional program site,  
44 shall implement a competency-based Direct Support Professional  
45 Career Development Pathway, in alignment with the Money  
46 Follows the Person Direct Support Professional Capacity Building

1 effort and<sup>1</sup> develop curriculum specific to the field of intellectual  
2 and developmental disabilities including <sup>1</sup>**an** a certificate,<sup>1</sup>  
3 associates' degree<sup>1,1</sup> and bachelors' degree.

4 <sup>1</sup>The Career Development Pathway shall assist individuals  
5 employed as a direct support professional increase their skills,  
6 achieve competency in the field, and as part of the certificate  
7 program, earn fully transferable course credit applicable toward an  
8 associate's degree in a human service or relevant healthcare field at  
9 any county college. It shall be the purpose of the Career  
10 Development Pathway to improve the recruitment, competence, and  
11 retention of the direct support professionals workforce.<sup>1</sup>

12  
13 5. a. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Office  
14 of the Secretary of Higher Education the sum of <sup>1</sup>**[\$450,000]**  
15 \$1,000,000<sup>1</sup> for the purposes of fulfilling the provisions of this  
16 act.

17 b. The Office of the Secretary of Higher Education shall  
18 distribute a grant to the New Jersey Community College  
19 Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development <sup>1</sup>**in**  
20 **partnership with a trade association serving organizations that**  
21 **employ direct support professionals**<sup>1</sup> to establish the Direct  
22 Support Professional Career Development <sup>1</sup>**Center by such criteria**  
23 **as are determined by the Secretary of Higher Education** Program at  
24 a Center for Workforce Innovation, and at the program's additional  
25 sites, distribute fellowship funding to cover living expenses for  
26 participating individuals, and establish a fund for existing direct  
27 support professionals to cover costs associated with furthering their  
28 education. No more than 10 percent of the funds appropriated  
29 pursuant to this section shall be used for administrative expenses.  
30 The Secretary of Higher Education shall approve any budget  
31 pursuant to this act<sup>1</sup>.

32  
33 6. This act shall take effect on the <sup>1</sup>**[180th day after]** first day  
34 of the sixth month next following<sup>1</sup> the date of enactment.