

SENATE LABOR COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 309

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 13, 2020

The Senate Labor Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 309.

This bill establishes the Energy and Manufacturing Workforce Development Program within the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, in consultation with the Department of Education, the Board of Public Utilities, and the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission. The purpose of the program is to evaluate and improve training opportunities for jobs in energy-related industries and manufacturing industries in order to increase the number of skilled workers in this State who are qualified for employment in those industries. Furthermore, the program must prioritize providing underrepresented groups, including ethnic minorities, women, veterans, and socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals, with access to training and jobs in energy-related and manufacturing industries in the State.

To fulfill the purpose of the program, the department is required to:

1. assess the effectiveness of State training programs to produce students and workers with the skills and technical expertise necessary to fill the employment opportunities available in the energy-related and manufacturing industries in the State;
2. evaluate the outreach and accessibility of such programs to underrepresented groups;
3. identify workforce needs and common skill gaps, by region and industry, within energy-related industries and manufacturing industries in the State to determine in-demand skills, abilities, and credentials;
4. develop a workforce strategy, formalized in a written plan, to satisfy workforce needs, close skill gaps, and improve access to entry-level and mid-level jobs in energy-related industries and manufacturing industries, with a focus on providing career pathways for underrepresented groups;
5. establish, publish, and maintain, in a format accessible to the public, a clearinghouse of information and resources on training and workforce development programs for jobs in energy-related industries and manufacturing industries;
6. annually award a minimum of five consortia of employers, labor organizations, and education institutions with training grants for the purpose of providing programs that focus on the development of in-demand skills in energy-related industries and manufacturing

industries. The department must prioritize awarding grants to consortia that include outreach strategies to underrepresented groups. Furthermore, all training grants are required to be administered by the Office of Customized Training and each grant awardee shall comply with all the requirements of section 5 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-5); and

7. prepare an annual report on the program's findings for the Governor and the Legislature.

The bill provides that five percent of the total revenues dedicated to the Workforce Development Partnership Fund during any one fiscal year must be reserved for the Energy and Manufacturing Workforce Development Program. Furthermore, the bill requires the department, to the extent permitted by law, to give priority in the use of other available State and federal job training funds, to fund the program to implement the workforce development strategy plan required under its provisions.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2020-2021 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.