



U.S. House of Representatives – Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee

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**Submitted to the Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee  
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U.S. House of Representatives  
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Economy  
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Thank you, Chairwoman Davis, Ranking Member Smucker, and members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify on Washington State’s future of work efforts. I am Nova Gattman, Deputy Director for External Affairs at Washington’s Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Today, I would like to share with you a snapshot of the workforce and economy of my home state, some ways we are already preparing for the jobs of the future, and recommendations from our newly released 2019 report<sup>1</sup> by Washington’s Future of Work Task Force.

**Washington State’s Diverse Geography and Demographics**

For those of you who are less familiar with our state, the most prominent players that come to mind may be companies like Microsoft, Amazon, or Starbucks – all large companies known for their innovation in the technology world. However, Washington is incredibly diverse in both its industries and topography, and there is much more to our complex state than the technology sector alone.

On the left side of the Cascade Mountains, Washington boasts stunning forests and ocean along with our most populous cities and counties. Spanning right of the Cascades are desert and irrigated farmland that make up an expansive rural region. Both regions are critical to our state’s economy and pose unique workforce challenges we must account for as we prepare for the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilcox, J & McMurrin, L. (2019) *Exploring and Developing Policies for Shared Prosperity among Washington’s Businesses, Workers, and Communities*. Olympia: Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. <https://www.wtb.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Future-of-Work-2019-Final-Report.pdf>



While Washington State is often associated with the Information Sector, which has the highest median annual pay at \$172,895, it is actually only our 10<sup>th</sup> most populous industry sector. Our leading industry sectors per capita include Government, Healthcare and Social Assistance, Retail, and Manufacturing. Agriculture typically is the second largest export category for the state (in terms of value), after aerospace. Our state leads the nation in the production of apples, cherries, hops, mint, and pears, and ranks second in grapes, onions, peas, potatoes, and raspberries.

One challenge we face is that economic prosperity is not equally distributed across these diverse regions and industry sectors. For example, the average annual pay in King County (home to Seattle, accounting for the largest share of Washington's population) is \$88,460 compared to \$47,933 outside of the Central Puget Sound. While unemployment can be as low as 2.7 percent in King County, some of our rural counties have experienced disproportionately high unemployment and poverty rates as compared to more populous ones, with unemployment rates as high as 9.6 percent and poverty rates as high as 28 percent<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, even among the most prosperous areas of Washington, many people of color and those with lower education attainment levels still face higher barriers to success as the economy, workforce, and industries of our state evolve with changing technology.

Since taking office, Governor Inslee has committed to addressing these disparities by increasing support for all working people of Washington. Washington State is working to build an economy that works for businesses and workers alike, partnering with business to transition our workforce to meet the demands of the future. Our state has led the nation on advancing labor standards by passing landmark legislation for long-term care coverage, improving overtime protections, and taking action to limit non-compete clauses, among other efforts.

Most recently, Governor Inslee has targeted education funding to link Washington youth to career-connected learning opportunities that prepare them for high-demand, high-wage jobs. This year, the governor signed the Workforce Education Investment Act, one of the most progressive higher education investments in the country. With appropriations totaling \$375 million, and a nearly one billion dollar investment planned over the next four years, the act guarantees financial aid for more than 110,000 qualified students in Washington to attend college and registered apprenticeships for free or at a discounted rate. Washington is the first state in the nation to include the student costs of registered apprenticeships as an option for students who qualify for a financial aid program of this magnitude.

Uniquely, our state's program has no age limit. This financial aid can serve an 18-year old traditional student seeking a four-year degree, or a 45 year old mid-career worker seeking

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<sup>2</sup> Statistics were calculated by the Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board using Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey (5-year data).

retraining or upskilling opportunities to keep pace with technology changes in their workplace – making it a key tool to prepare our workforce for the future of work at any stage in life. In addition, the act also created and funded the Career Connect Washington framework, which I will briefly describe.

### **Career Connect Washington and the Washington College Grant**

Today's economy and workplace has placed more demands on workers as the nature of work evolves at ever-increasing rates with the advent and implementation of new technology in the workplace. At the same time, market forces such as private equity buyouts of traditional brick-and-mortar stores, outsourcing, and international trade are compounding these technological challenges for workers. To remain relevant in this competitive environment, workers increasingly require new training and skills development or risk being displaced.

Our Future of Work report highlights that 65 percent<sup>3</sup> of the jobs today's kindergarteners will hold when they become adults do not exist today. Given the disruption today's workers are likely to encounter throughout their careers given our rapidly changing economy, it's critical that we are preparing our young people with the capacity for critical thinking, creative problem solving, and experience applying what they learn from a workplace setting in their education. Washington is poised to prepare the next generation with key skills like these through Governor Inslee's new Career Connect Washington initiative.

The ambitious ten-year goal of Career Connect Washington is to ensure every student in Washington participates in career-connected learning. This is supported in four primary ways:

- 1) Providing **local grants** to develop career-connected learning programs like registered apprenticeship and paid internship opportunities, and build capacity in existing programs to scale up opportunities in every sector – from healthcare to information technology – to fit the unique needs of each Washington region.
- 2) Connecting and building on our community and technical college programs and career and technical education (CTE) programs in K-12 through **increased enrollment funding**, expansion of after school and summer school career-connected learning programs, dual credit fee waivers (the fee students or the school would normally pay to a college or university for the college credit received from a course), and other similar changes to make participating in these programs as easy as any other academic program in a school.

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<sup>3</sup> World Economic Forum. (2016). The Future of Jobs: The Future of Jobs, Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Geneva: World Economic Forum.

- 3) **Increasing awareness** among students of what opportunities are available for career-connected learning and **supporting businesses** that want to get involved.
- 4) **Coordination by a planning team** including government and education experts, labor leaders and members of the business community. In particular, guidance from a business leadership team representing diverse industry sectors helps to build buy-in among the business community and provide insight on policy implementation.

By the broadest count, since 2017, 78,190 career-connected learning experiences have already been made possible through this work, and at least 17 new employers have begun using registered apprenticeship.

### **Current Supports for Dislocated Workers and Mid-Career Upskilling Efforts**

Washington's public workforce development system, or talent pipeline development system, includes the K-20 education system, registered apprenticeship and other credential providers, as well as the network of support services needed to ensure every Washingtonian has equitable access to, and the ability to benefit from, education and training. As a critical part of this system, the Washington Employment Security Department (ESD) administers a host of federal and state programs to help workers at various stages in their career, such as Unemployment Insurance, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs including the Dislocated Worker Program and Wagner-Peyser Employment Services Program, Trade Adjustment Assistance, Rapid Response Services, in addition to administering Washington's new Paid Family Medical Leave Program. These programs are particularly important to mitigate adverse impacts, such as eviction, loss of health insurance and food insecurity, that workers are at higher risk for when experiencing layoffs or dislocation from work for other reasons, and connect them with sustainable career opportunities.

Washington is an excellent place for business and for workers, which helps our state develop key relationships to best support dislocated workers. Our state has a strong partnership with organized labor, which helps ESD gather business intelligence and information directly from impacted workers to initiate contact with workers eligible for services as early as possible. One area where we take a unique approach is in Rapid Response events, which are triggered by potential layoffs. During these events ESD funds peer workers who are already receiving services to engage other employees being laid off, who are therefore able to gather information from someone in a similar situation first, rather than the employer or the state.

Another successful feature of our Rapid Response program has been increased employment contracts. This strategy employs statewide Rapid Response funds awarded through contracts to local Workforce Development Boards to improve dislocated worker participant outcomes, expand layoff aversion activities, and improve Rapid Response services for workers and



businesses. Several promising pilots in 2016 led to statewide implementation in 2017 and beyond. Preliminary implementation data suggests participant enrollments have increased by 69 percent, while participant employment two quarters after exit have increased by 78 percent.

We have found we are most successful in supporting the needs of our customers in the workforce system when we can begin working with them as early as possible – long before a business shuts its doors or an individual seeks Unemployment Insurance. For example, a mid-size drone supplier in rural southwest Washington was struggling to find the workforce they needed to expand their company. This was a region of our state with limited industry diversity and postsecondary education access. The company was considering a move out of state until the Workforce Board was able to approach them with funding through an upskill-backfill initiative, funded by Governor Inslee's Statewide Activities Fund from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. This project helped them to skill-up not only their current workforce, but this training led to an expansion of the plant, and plans to hire approximately 300 more workers from the area in the next year.

While our workforce development system seeks to be as proactive as possible in how we serve both workers and businesses, a significant challenge is the reactionary nature of the federal funding streams we use to serve workers facing displacement due to shifts in labor market.

The current system of federal supports we use to proactively intervene with workers and businesses upstream are primarily focused on identifying mass layoffs that qualify for funding, informing the effected group of workers, and providing assistance to avoid or mitigate mass layoffs and assist workers. Unfortunately, this means smaller layoffs and individual job losses due to rapidly evolving market changes and changes to technology do not receive the same support. To be effective as we prepare for the future of work, our workforce development systems – both at the national and state levels – must move beyond responses to single employers and look towards anticipating and addressing sector shifts and identifying groups of workers at risk. With a more intentional and proactive approach, our systems can provide more targeted worker supports to prepare workers to grow with their companies as they evolve in the future of work – rather than waiting to respond to mass layoffs.

### **Paid Family Medical Leave**

Another way that Washington is leading the way to better support workers and employers in a rapidly changing economy is through the introduction of our Paid Family Medical Leave program. Building on the lessons learned from four states who introduced programs before us, Washington developed one of the strongest and most generous Paid Family and Medical Leave programs in the nation for both employers and employees. The key aspects of our program include:

- **Generous allotment of leave:** Washington has one of the most generous benefits of any Paid Family and Medical Leave program in the nation. Workers are allowed up to 12 weeks off for either family or medical leave, or 16 weeks if they experience both events in a given year.
- **Shared cost by employers and employees:** The program is funded by a small premium (0.4 percent of an employee's wage) that is shared by the employer and employee – similar to health insurance. Employees pay roughly two-thirds of the total premium while employers pay about one-third.
- **Higher wage replacement for lower-wage workers:** Other states with paid family leave found low-wage workers often could not afford to take the benefit because the wage replacement was too low. To address this effect, Washington made progressive wage replacement, where lower-wage workers receive a higher percentage of their income while on leave, is a cornerstone of the program. The average worker in Washington will receive up to 90 percent of their weekly wage when they take Paid Family and Medical Leave.
- **Portable benefit:** Paid Family and Medical Leave in Washington is portable – ensuring all hours worked, even across multiple jobs, count toward eligibility, and the benefit isn't lost if you change jobs.
- **Medical and family leave in one:** Washington State's program is the first Paid Family and Medical Leave program in the U.S. to be built without an existing temporary disability program in place – ensuring all workers have coverage for both personal medical and family reasons to take paid leave when they need to care for themselves or those they love.
- **Business Assistance Grants:** Available for medium-size business with 150 or fewer employees as well as for small businesses that choose to pay the employer share of the premium, these grants of up to \$3,000, ten times per year, help cover costs associated with an employee being out on leave, including paying overtime or the hiring of a temporary worker.

We are proud that workers will begin receiving benefits through Washington's Paid Family Medical Leave program starting January 1, 2020.

### **Washington's Future of Work Task Force**

The future of work poses pressing questions for Washington's workforce, employers, and our state. In April 2018, Washington's Legislature and Governor Inslee established the Future of Work Task Force. Made up of four legislators, six business, and six labor leaders, the 16-member Task Force developed a set of policy recommendations to help Washington businesses and workers prosper together. On December 6 of this year, the Task Force released our report – the culmination of 15 months of research, stakeholder engagement, meetings,



events, and more – conducted by Washington Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board staff and Task Force members.

Washington’s Future of Work Task Force was a first in the nation project. It gave us, Washington’s Workforce Board, and our many partners, the opportunity to explore the future of work as a policy idea in much greater detail. As part of this work, we engaged in an extensive literature review and found that most predictions indicate the future is not all about job elimination and robots – although there is clearly room for concern. A more likely future is one where technology changes some aspects of jobs – with the goal of freeing up humans for less-routine, safer tasks. However, the jobs most likely to be automated are the same jobs most prominent in the rural areas of the state that are currently experiencing higher unemployment and lower wages – a theme I will revisit.

Over the course of its work, the Task Force came up with five broad policy areas and 17 specific recommendations. I’ll provide a description of these five policy areas, and then delve into more detail on a few that are most relevant to today’s discussion.

- 1) Enhance worker training so employees can be upskilled as technology evolves, providing career advancement for employees, and enhanced productivity for employers.
  - In short, current workers need “upskilling” so they can stay on top of technology as it evolves, rather than being left behind.
- 2) Understand and set guidelines on deploying advanced technologies.
  - To better understand this, the Task Force has recommended that we review the state government workforce first to see how state employees use and adapt to new technology, with the long-term goal of developing a guide to best implement new technologies in a way that both serves business goals, but also supports the workforce.
- 3) Examine how to modernize worker support systems to support the changing nature of work for many individuals.
  - We need to examine how policies can better support workers who are increasingly mobile and ensure they receive the benefits they need while participating in a more nimble workforce.
- 4) Reimagine career and credentialing pathways for a workforce that needs access to short-term, employer-recognized training, but lacks a way to validate and compare the value of education opportunities without improved labor market data.
  - To keep our workforce prepared for the future we need to do a better job of compiling career and credentialing pathways—from short-term certificates to

four-year degrees and beyond. Even micro-credentials and badges can mean the difference between getting a job or being sidelined. However, we need to be able to sort and compare these education and training credentials so that both workers and employers know what skills and competencies to expect from these credentials.

- 5) Deploy economic development and other state resources to support small and mid-size businesses, create family-sustaining jobs in every region of the state, and ensure equitable access to those jobs.
  - We need to support more small and mid-size businesses, many of which are located in rural parts of our state, farther from our high-tech, urban hubs. Supporting these businesses can help communities thrive and keep more jobs in less populated areas where every employer and every job counts.

### **Job Quality**

Washington has a strong labor community, with a union membership rate of to 19.8 percent of the total workforce in 2018 according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>4</sup>, and six leaders from that community had a significant presence on the Future of Work Task Force. While many of the previously discussed recommendations are rooted in supports and protections for workers, two discussions from the Task Force stand out as important to the role of workers as the jobs of the future take shape.

The Task Force spent a great deal of time deliberating over the concept of “job quality,” how to define it, and what it means as the nature and structure of employment changes in the future. From the idea of livable wages and benefits to the notion of how scheduling algorithms can cause disruption to workers, job quality covers many different issues. Other disruptive trends affecting worker and employer dynamics such as short-term, contracted work, and increased automation that impacts both worker productivity and autonomy, are also likely to remain a focal point for future job quality consideration. The Task Force determined this issue requires thoughtful policy review and a deeper level of exploration, including identifying promising practices across industry sectors.

Robots and software programs, fueled by advances in AI, are becoming increasingly proficient at performing an array of tasks more efficiently and accurately than the humans who created them. The collection and analysis of an immense and growing volume of data is providing new ways to conduct business and even understand human behavior. While these advances

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2018) *Table 5. Union affiliation of employed wage and salary workers by state, 2017-2018 annual averages*. Retrieved December 16, 2019 from U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.t05.htm>



continue to fuel increased productivity and economic growth, these gains are often distributed inequitably and can result in job loss and reduced job quality if not carefully balanced. After extensive discussion on these topics, the Task Force came to agreement on two recommendations to position Washington State government as a leader in equitably balancing support of workers and use of advancing technology:

1. Perform a worker-impact audit on the selection and adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other advanced technology within Washington State government to address deployment of new technologies, worker engagement in the decision process, and equity in the workplace.
2. Upon completion of the state government audit, develop a methodology for assessing and evaluating advanced technology within state government building on the audit's findings including best or promising practices for engaging and supporting workers affected by technological changes to be implemented as standard practice in agencies.

What is clear is that advanced technologies are powerful, compelling, and present both challenges and opportunities. It's a pivotal moment for Washington policymakers, businesses, workers and consumers to deliberate thoughtfully about how to use these new technologies to serve Washington citizens productively, ethically, and responsibly – and I urge federal policy makers to do the same.

Now, I'd like to go back and elaborate on the first and last recommendation areas.

### **Comprehensive Worker Upskilling and Lifelong Learning**

First – in the topic of comprehensive worker upskilling and lifelong learning, we have a number of recommendations to better support our workers as advanced technology, artificial intelligence, and automation become more prevalent in the workplace.

Incumbent worker training is a major component of our state's goals for preparing for the future of work. The best way to ensure that our workers aren't left behind as technology becomes more common in our workplaces is to ensure that they have the skills to grow with their employers and in their careers.

Our state's largest incumbent worker training program co-invests with business and workers on customized career training. The Job Skills Program, a dollar-for-dollar matching grant, is run through the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges and currently supports 39 projects this biennium in two completed quarterly funding rounds.

One great example of this partnership is McCain Foods, which is a food processing company based in rural eastern Washington. Using the Job Skills Program with the local Big Bend



Community College, they plan to serve 462 incumbent workers, and plan to hire 180 new employees in the next 12 months. This program is helping to ensure the success of a \$300 million expansion of the McCain Foods plant in Othello, Washington. New advances in manufacturing are creating new styles of work in this sector, which, in turn, require new and updated skills for employees, including stronger employability skills in math, science, communications, problem solving, teamwork, and customer awareness. The McCain Foods project featured upskilling of their current workers, including the technical skills needed to remain competitive with the updated technology in the plant, but also improving the leadership abilities of the workers.

Funding for this valuable program should be expanded, and the Workforce Board has asked for funds to fill the unmet employer applications for the upcoming year. Our long-term goal is to increase investments in incumbent worker training by \$25 million in the next biennium. The Task Force recommendation supports this request.

Another example in this policy area is the Task Force's recommendation to establish Lifelong Learning Accounts, or LiLAs. LiLAs are portable, employee-owned accounts that are designed to help pay for education and training expenses, with employers and employees both contributing to the accounts. They are administered by private financial institutions, community-based non-profits, or other non-government entities, and function like 401(k) plans, with employees making regular contributions that are matched by their employer. Washington was one of the first states in the country to initiate a LiLA pilot program, including the passage of state legislation sponsored by then state Senator Derek Kilmer, now Representative Kilmer. We were preceded by Maine in 2005. LiLA accounts could be used not only for tuition and training costs, but for a range of related expenses including, but not limited to, child care, books, and admission test fees. This is a critical component of the program, as workers and students often are balancing family responsibilities at the same time as their education, and these costs can often be the deciding factor between finishing a credential or degree or dropping out.

While LiLAs showed great promise, including employer reports of greater morale and lower turnover rates after their implementation, due to funding constraints brought on by the 2008 recession, the initial pilots could not be expanded. The report recommends funding the program for three to five organizations to re-start LiLAs, including support for scholarships to jumpstart the program, and the necessary counseling and career navigation services to best prepare the worker for their postsecondary goals.

## **Equal Access to Economic Development Resources Across Washington**

Now, I'd like to highlight recommendations from the fifth policy area.

The Task Force members strongly believe that to ensure shared prosperity, we must support our businesses, particularly those small and mid-size businesses in rural areas. The lead recommendation in this area is to prioritize the use of economic, workforce, and community development resources spent by the state to support and generate family-wage jobs (an income level sufficient to support a family, including a dependent spouse and children) with a focus on rural vitality. The Task Force agreed that state-funded efforts to attract or retain business should be clear about the goal of creating family-wage jobs, and communicate this goal to prospective businesses looking to move to our state. To do this, economic, workforce, and community development policies must come into closer alignment. This could be done through the formation of a cross-agency work group to collaborate more effectively at state and local levels, including the establishment of a shared set of common goals and measures that can be used by economic, workforce, and community development sectors at both the state and local levels to make evidence-based decisions.

Additionally, being intentional in providing the right support to our rural areas was a critical piece of the Task Force's work. We learned some services are more or less beneficial to different groups or geographic areas, making additional flexibility critical to allow local areas to build the right service structures to meet the needs of their communities.

The Task Force also encourages continued investment into rural broadband – Washington invested \$21 million into this strategy in the last legislative session, and we hope to continue that work in future years. The availability of broadband opens the door to residents in more rural areas to access online resources such as job training and business development services.

Another recommendation recognizes the role that libraries play in our communities as a hub for those with limited access to the internet or other resources. The Task Force calls for pilot projects to serve underrepresented populations with access to training, education, and business development resources in public libraries, which can help fill in gaps as we work to extend our reach in broadband availability and better access to services.

The Task Force also recommends the use of Collaborative Applied Research – which pairs a business and its workers with a college or university to work together to develop innovative new products or solve a business problem. Collaborative Applied Research is successful because workers, faculty, and students engage together in the research. The benefits to the collaborators go far beyond the results of the research. Faculty are able to keep their knowledge up-to-date and transfer that knowledge to their students. Student researchers experience real-world applications of their classroom learning. Workers are recognized for their



knowledge and experience in their field, and their skills stay relevant to the trajectory their employer is taking—and they may even help define that trajectory.

The Task Force report calls for the creation of one or two pilot projects (one focused on the manufacturing sector) that utilize this model, with the goal of expansion to more areas and industries in future years.

Finally, our fifth recommendation would reinstate a State Office of Employee Ownership, which was cut during the recession. Task Force staff conducted extensive research on employee ownership, and businesses with employee ownership are more successful, generate greater income, wealth, retirement funds, and benefits for employee owners, regardless of race, gender, ability, and zip code<sup>5</sup>.

Further, employee ownership would help to address issues of business owners who would like to retire but have no one to purchase the business. In 2019, there were 57,730 baby boomer-owned businesses in Washington, employing 571,420 employees, and generating \$112.5 billion in sales<sup>6</sup>, according to research from Project Equity. With 60 percent of these owners planning to sell their business in the next decade, and only 15 percent having a succession plan in place, there is significant potential for negative economic consequences. This is particularly true for small and rural communities less able to withstand the ripple effects of losing a significant local business.

The office would provide outreach and support to businesses and workers about the value and technical aspects of employee ownership, and link them with financial institutions to help finance this changeover where needed.

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If we've learned one thing from the Future of Work project, it's that we're all in this together—business, and labor, and communities—big and small. Although our Task Force was focused on developing the best future of work policies to serve the residents of Washington, I hope these recommendations can serve as helpful blueprints for other forward-looking states, and federal policy makers like those of you here today.

By working toward a shared prosperity for businesses, workers, and communities, I am confident we can keep on thriving long into the future.

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<sup>5</sup> National Center for Employee Ownership (NCEO). (2017). *Employee Ownership and Economic Well-Being*. Oakland, CA: National Center for Employee Ownership (NCEO).

<sup>6</sup> Project Equity. (2019). *Small Business Closures Washington State*. Retrieved September 10, 2019, from Project Equity: <https://www.project-equity.org/communities/small-business-closure-crisis/washingtonstate/>



Thank you for the invitation to share some of our work in Washington exploring how to ensure our state is better prepared to address the challenges and opportunities of the future of work. I'm happy to answer any questions.

## Washington’s Future of Work Task Force Policy Recommendations

### Comprehensive Worker Upskilling and Lifelong Learning

1. (a) Support the Workforce Board’s request for additional funding for incumbent worker training.
- (b) Extend the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) Customized Training Program.
- (c) Establish a requirement for a worker-management oversight body for each awardee of state incumbent worker training funds.
- (d) Add and evaluate new outcome metrics on the Job Skills and Customized Training programs.
2. Remove the six-credit eligibility requirement from the Washington College Grant program for students co-enrolled in High School+ and I-BEST who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent.
3. (a) Fund the Lifelong Learning Accounts (LiLA) program, where employers and employees jointly fund an employee-owned educational savings account, as written in state statute (RCW 28C.18.180).
- (b) Provide funds to establish a career and education counseling network to support LiLA account holders and other workers who are planning for professional development and economic opportunity.

### Use and Adoption of Technology in the Workplace

1. Perform a worker-impact audit on the selection and adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other advanced technologies within Washington State government.
2. Develop a methodology for assessing and evaluating advanced technology within state government.

### Improved Labor Market Data and Credentialing Transparency

1. Extend and utilize the Workforce Board’s [Career Bridge-Credential Engine](#) project on credential transparency and competency-based credentialing as a learning laboratory among the higher education community.
2. Add a new occupation data field to Unemployment Insurance Wage Reports, provided by employers for each W-2 employee.

### Modernized Worker Support System

1. Analyze the impact of existing worker benefit and protection structures, and provide recommendations to better support workers as the nature of work changes.

### Equal Access to Economic Development Resources Across Washington

1. Prioritize the use of state-funded economic, workforce and community development resources to support and generate family-wage jobs, with a focus on rural vitality.
2. Continue funding rural broadband efforts and seek out similar initiatives that may constitute best practices in other areas of the nation.
3. Enlist libraries to become greater hubs for community training, credentialing, and entrepreneurship/small business development.
4. Fund the development of accessible collaborative applied research (CAR) models that will bring two- and four-year college faculty and students together with small and midsize businesses and their workers to invent or adopt new technology or processes.
5. Reinstate a state office of employee ownership.