



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senate Passes Workforce Development Legislative Package

JACK M. MARTINS June 15, 2016

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The New York State Senate today passed six bills that will strengthen the state's economy by training job seekers and existing employees for the employment opportunities that are in demand. The package of legislation is among the results of the Senate's Task Force on Workforce Development, led by Co-Chairs Senator Jack Martins (R-C-I, Mineola) and Senator George A. Amedore, Jr. (R-C-I, Rotterdam), which has examined ways to close the skills gap by improving the connections between prospective employees and employers looking to hire new skilled workers.

Senator Martins, Chairman of the Senate Labor Committee, said, "Our first job must be to connect people to jobs. Time and again we're told that the jobs are there but the training isn't. We must ensure that job seekers can access the necessary skills to fill open jobs. Enhancing and expanding training programs, in partnering with our local high schools, community colleges and SUNY and CUNY institutions, will give people the tools needed for careers in fields that are in-demand. Our priority has been developing new ways to connect people with jobs for the benefit of workers, businesses and our economy as a whole. Passing these measures is a major step forward in that effort."

Senator Amedore said, “To achieve a healthy, vibrant economy in the state of New York, it is critical that we invest in a first-rate, skilled workforce. The bills we are passing today come as the result of input we have heard from businesses and educators throughout the state, and will provide us with additional tools and resources to help bridge the gap between businesses who need to hire skilled employees and potential workers. We are also making a strong, lasting investment in vocational education opportunities, including P-Tech and BOCES that provide our students with hands-on learning experience to educate them and prepare them for future employment.”

In May, the Task Force issued a report summarizing their findings and recommendations after holding forums across the state to receive input from leaders in business, labor, public education, higher education, local governments, and workforce training and development. The report identified ways to help improve employee readiness; better meet the workforce needs of private sector employers; connect job seekers with potential employers; retrain those who have lost jobs; and help make New York State's overall economy more robust, dynamic, and resilient. The legislation passed today would make great strides in accomplishing these goals and includes:

- S7967, sponsored by Senator Martins, expands the type of data collected by the Department of Labor to include forward-facing job statistics that can be used by employers and educators to accurately predict future needs and properly prepare the workforce for career opportunities. Often, the best way to fill jobs requires raising awareness about opportunities at the high school and community college levels, allowing students the chance to identify and qualify for such job opportunities. This bill aims to put the requisite information and data in the hands of students and administrators so that students can be best informed about the skills and experiences necessary to obtain employment as they consider their future educational and/or career path beyond high school and community

college.

- S7921, sponsored by Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R, Syosset), would invest \$35 million to expand New York State's Pathways in Technology Schools (P-TECHs) and Early College High Schools to meet student demand and enhance educational performance. These unique programs prepare students for college-level coursework that promotes future academic performance and enables students to get their high school diplomas while also earning free associate degrees for high-skilled jobs or taking other college-credit-bearing courses. Currently, P-TECHs and Early College High Schools are not codified in state law, but this bill would make them permanent and provide a reliable funding stream that eliminates uncertainty and gives reliability to participating students.

Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R, Syosset), Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, "Education and workforce development must collaborate to ensure the skills gap is reduced and New York State jobs are filled with highly qualified workers. This significant investment will help meet the diverse needs of all regions of the state. A successful combination of investment and education can create the kind of skilled workforce that can adapt and thrive in our perpetually changing world."

- S7920, sponsored by Senator Patty Ritchie (R-C, Heuvelton), helps increase access to career and tech programs at BOCES. The bill would require the state Department of Education to work with districts to remove some of the stigma associated with taking classes through BOCES; have districts encourage students to take advantage of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) services that BOCES offers; and increase the current salary cap for BOCES instructors from \$30,000 to \$50,000 to attract and retain qualified and skilled teachers.

Senator Ritchie said, "For many students, BOCES is a place where they can gain the hands-on experience necessary to prepare themselves for future careers in everything from

manufacturing to agriculture. Through this legislation, we will not only improve our efforts to make students more career-ready, we will also attract - and retain - talented educators who can prepare our young people to strengthen New York's workforce."

- S7915, sponsored by Senator Martins, improves participation in apprenticeships by promoting coordination between high school guidance counselors and local building trades councils. The bill requires the state Education Department, in consultation with the Department of Labor, to develop guidelines for guidance counselors to help make students aware of the full complement of options available to them after high school, including apprenticeship programs that allow students to earn a paycheck while undergoing classroom learning under the supervision of a professional tradesman.

- S7646, sponsored by Senator Kenneth LaValle (R-C-I, Port Jefferson), creates the Help Individuals Reach Employment (HIRE) program to help students who have graduated from a SUNY or CUNY institution but cannot find full-time employment. To enhance their employment marketability, a qualified applicant who graduates, but then cannot find full-time employment, could apply for a certificate program tailored to job market needs, free of charge, either on campus or online.

Senator LaValle, Chairman of the Senate's Higher Education Committee, said, "Higher education is critically important in the current job market. The HIRE program would help to ensure better employment outcomes for specific SUNY/CUNY graduates by enhancing the student's marketability in the workplace."

- S7968A, sponsored by Senator Martins, enhances degree or certificate programs at community colleges in order to increase successful job placements for students. Regional Community College Councils would consult with and make recommendations to community college boards of trustees on ways to create new degree or certificate programs, or

restructure current programs to improve the connections between the skills being taught and the needs of industry.

The bills have been sent to the Assembly.