ASSEMBLY, No. 5731

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

222nd LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 29, 2026

Sponsored by:
Assemblywoman HEATHER SIMMONS
District 3 (Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes two-year pilot program to recognize certain noncredit programs in county college operational aid; appropriates $5 million.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.

AN ACT establishing a pilot program to recognize certain noncredit programs in county college operational aid and making an appropriation.

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

1. As used in this act, "qualifying noncredit instructional activity" means a noncredit career and technical education program that: addresses short-term workforce education needs; prepares students for employment in high-demand occupations or other positions with documented demand in the regional workforce; meets minimum instructional and quality standards established by the New Jersey Council of County Colleges; and upon program completion, may lead to an industry-recognized credential, certification, or occupational license in a high-demand field, including but not limited to, health care, skilled trades, advanced manufacturing, transportation, information technology, and public safety.

2. The Secretary of Higher Education shall, in consultation with the New Jersey Council of County Colleges and the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, develop and administer a "Noncredit Workforce Student Success Pilot Program." The pilot program shall be offered for a period of two years and shall provide each county college with a supplement to the county college operational aid provided by the State. The supplemental funding shall be made available to support the operational costs of qualifying noncredit instructional activities. The purpose of the pilot program shall be to determine a proposed uniform methodology for incorporating qualifying noncredit instructional activity into the distribution of State operational aid to county colleges, which instructional activity is not included in the county college's educational and general costs for the purposes of determining State aid pursuant to N.J.S.18A:64A-22.

3. a. The Secretary of Higher Education shall, in consultation with the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, direct the New Jersey Council of County Colleges to undertake a review of qualifying noncredit instructional activities delivered by county colleges.

b. The purpose of the review shall be to:

(1) identify, for each county college, the noncredit instructional activities that are to be eligible for supplemental funding pursuant to this act; and

(2) develop a proposed uniform methodology for incorporating funding for qualifying noncredit instructional activity into the

performance-based formula developed pursuant to N.J.S.18A:64A-22.

c. In developing a proposed performance-based formula for qualifying noncredit instructional activities of county colleges pursuant to this section, the council shall develop a methodology that:

(1) converts qualifying noncredit instructional activity into a standard base funding unit;

(2) assigns additional funding weight to successful program completion by a student enrolled in qualifying noncredit instructional activity; and

(3) assigns additional or higher funding weight to a qualifying noncredit instructional activity leading to an industry-recognized credential, certification or occupational license upon a student's completion of the activity.

d. In undertaking the review required pursuant to this section, the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, in consultation with the Secretary of Higher Education and the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, shall, to the greatest extent possible, incorporate and utilize research and expertise available from subject matter experts as well as data and performance measures available from federal, State, academic, and other research sources, including the Statewide Longitudinal Data System for Education and Workforce Development established pursuant to P.L.2025, c.388 (C.18A:4-2.1 et al.) and the State Eligible Training Provider List maintained pursuant to section 14 of P.L.2005, c.354 (C.34:15C-10.2).

e. The review required pursuant to this section shall be completed within six months following the date of enactment of this act and shall include the council's recommendation for incorporating funding for qualifying noncredit instructional activities into the performance-based formula developed pursuant to N.J.S.18A:64A-22.

f. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the funding methodology developed pursuant to this section shall first be utilized to distribute funding to county colleges for the operational costs of qualifying noncredit instructional activities in the first full academic year next following the completion of the review required pursuant to this section and shall continue for the following academic year.

4. a. The Secretary of Higher Education shall submit a report to the Governor, and to the Legislature pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164 (C.52:14-19.1), on the Noncredit Workforce Student Success Pilot Program established pursuant to section 2 of this act, following each academic year in which supplemental State operational aid is distributed pursuant to the pilot program.

b. The report shall include, but not be limited to, information on:

(1) the amount of supplemental State operational aid annually provided to each county college for the operational costs of qualifying noncredit instructional activities pursuant to the pilot program;

(2) the way in which aid was calculated and the extent to which the calculation was incorporated into the proposed methodology for determining State aid pursuant to N.J.S.18A:64A-22;

(3) information on the impact of the pilot program on students who completed qualifying noncredit instructional activities, including:

(a) the number and types of industry-valued credentials attained;

(b) the number and types of placements in high-demand occupations and the impact in meeting regional workforce labor market needs; and

(c) the earnings outcomes of students who secured employment in a high-demand occupation or other occupation that meets regional workforce labor market needs; and

(4) a recommendation for the permanent inclusion of State support for the operational costs of qualifying noncredit instructional activities in the performance-based formula developed pursuant to N.J.S.18A:64A-22.

5. The sum of $5,000,000 shall be annually appropriated in each of the two years of the pilot program from the Workforce Development Partnership Fund established pursuant to section 9 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-9) for the purpose of providing supplemental aid to county colleges for the operational costs of qualifying noncredit instructional activities.

6. There is appropriated from the Workforce Development Partnership Fund established pursuant to section 9 of P.L.1992, c.43 (C.34:15D-9), the sum of $5,000,000 to implement the provisions of this act.

7. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill requires the Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges ("council"), to develop and administer a two-year pilot program to provide each county college with a supplement to the county college operational aid provided by the State. The purpose of the pilot program is to determine a proposed uniform methodology for incorporating qualifying noncredit instructional activity into the distribution of State operational aid to county colleges.

Certain noncredit instructional activity is not included in the county college's educational and general costs for the purpose of developing a performance-based funding formula for county college operating aid under current law. This formula is first developed by the council and approved by the State Treasurer and the secretary.

The supplemental funding would be made available to support the operational costs of qualifying noncredit instructional activities. Qualifying noncredit instructional activities include programs at county colleges that: (1) address short-term workforce education needs; (2) prepare students for employment in high-demand occupations or other positions with documented demand in the regional workforce; (3) meet minimum instructional and quality standards established by the New Jersey Council of County Colleges; and (4) upon program completion, may lead to an industry-recognized credential, certification, or occupational license in a high demand field, including but not limited to, health care, skilled trades, advanced manufacturing, transportation, information technology, and public safety.

The bill requires the Secretary of Higher Education, in consultation with the Commissioner of Labor and Workforce Development, to direct the council to undertake a review of qualifying noncredit instructional activities in order to: (1) identify, for each county college, the noncredit instructional activities that are to be eligible for supplemental funding pursuant to the bill; and (2) develop a proposed uniform methodology for incorporating funding for qualifying noncredit instructional activity into the current performance-based formula for county college operating aid. To the greatest extent possible, the review will utilize research and expertise available from subject matter experts as well as data and performance measures available from federal, State, academic, and other research sources, including the Statewide Longitudinal Data System for Education and Workforce Development and the State Eligible Training Provider List.

Under the bill, $5 million is to be appropriated from the Workforce Development Partnership Fund in each of the two years of the pilot program for the purpose of providing supplemental aid to county colleges for the operational costs of qualifying noncredit instructional activities.

Following the completion of the review, the secretary is required to submit a report to the Governor and to the Legislature that includes various information on the impact of the pilot program and a recommendation for the permanent inclusion of State support for the operational costs of qualifying noncredit instructional activities in State operational aid to county colleges.