



General Assembly

January Session, 2021

Committee Bill No. 5668

LCO No. 4394



Referred to Committee on HIGHER EDUCATION AND
EMPLOYMENT ADVANCEMENT

Introduced by:
(HED)

***AN ACT REQUIRING THE OFFICE OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO
ESTABLISH A MICROCREDENTIAL PILOT PROGRAM.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General
Assembly convened:

- 1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2021*) (a) As used in this section:
- 2 (1) "Microcredential" means a digital badge earned in six months or
3 less through completion of for-credit or noncredit coursework and
4 demonstrated mastery of a specific skill;
- 5 (2) "Digital badge" means an indicator of accomplishment or skill that
6 can be displayed, accessed and verified online; and
- 7 (3) "Microcredential provider" means an institution of higher
8 education, an employer in the state, a professional association or other
9 entity that develops and offers a microcredential.
- 10 (b) Not later than January 1, 2022, the Office of Higher Education, in
11 consultation with the Board of Regents for Higher Education, shall
12 establish a pilot program to develop a virtual platform on which

13 microcredentials may be earned or renewed by state residents and
14 offered by microcredential providers. The office may enter into a
15 contract with a third-party administrator to develop and administer the
16 virtual platform. Any such third-party administrator shall be required
17 under such contract to charge such third-party administrator's lowest
18 available rate for such services. Such virtual platform shall include, but
19 not be limited to, (1) a catalog of the available microcredentials with
20 information submitted by the microcredential provider pursuant to
21 subsection (c) of this section, (2) an access portal for a microcredential
22 provider to develop and offer microcredentials, (3) an access portal for
23 state residents to (A) earn or renew microcredentials, (B) share the
24 receipt of microcredentials with employers or institutions of higher
25 education, and (C) submit applications for jobs opportunities posted on
26 the virtual platform, (4) an access portal for employers in the state to
27 post job opportunities that require skills which may be demonstrated
28 through one or more microcredentials, (5) online support for all users of
29 the virtual platform, and (6) a means for employers and institutions of
30 higher education to prepurchase microcredentials for distribution to
31 employees or students.

32 (c) Each user of the virtual platform shall register in the form and
33 manner prescribed by the Office of Higher Education. Each
34 microcredential provider shall submit information for each new
35 microcredential offered by such provider, including, but not limited to,
36 (1) the name of the microcredential, (2) whether the microcredential is
37 industry-recognized, (3) whether a microcredential is offered through
38 synchronous or asynchronous coursework, (4) the enrollment fee, if any,
39 provided such fee shall not exceed an amount established by the office,
40 (5) the expected time for completion, (6) any required prerequisites,
41 provided related work experience shall be allowed in lieu of course
42 prerequisites whenever possible, (7) the effective period of a
43 microcredential if such microcredential is for a limited duration, (8) the
44 rubric by which a microcredential provider evaluates whether an
45 enrolled student successfully demonstrated mastery of the skill related
46 to the microcredential, and (9) if the microcredential provider is an

47 institution of higher education, the number college credits earned upon
48 completion and the career pathway for such microcredential, including,
49 but not limited to, certificate or degree programs to which any
50 completed credits may be applied.

51 (d) The Office of Higher Education may deny access to the virtual
52 platform to any microcredential provider that offers one or more
53 microcredentials that do not meet the academic or industry standards
54 of employers and institutions of higher education in the state. The office
55 shall establish a process by which such microcredential provider may
56 appeal the office's denial of access.

57 (e) The Office of Higher Education shall consult with the Department
58 of Economic and Community Development and the Labor Department
59 to identify shortages in the state labor market and solicit the
60 participation of microcredential providers to offer microcredentials on
61 the virtual platform to meet such shortages.

62 (f) Not later than six months after a person has completed a
63 microcredential, the Office of Higher Education shall distribute a survey
64 to such person which shall include, but not be limited to, questions
65 regarding such person's (1) goals for completing the microcredential, (2)
66 employment status, (3) experience with the coursework and the virtual
67 platform, and (4) intention to use the virtual platform in the future to
68 earn other microcredentials or to seek employment.

69 (g) Each employer posting job opportunities on the virtual platform
70 shall submit a fee in an amount established by the Office of Higher
71 Education for each such posting. Any enrollment fee or job posting fee
72 shall be deposited into the microcredential account established
73 pursuant to subsection (h) of this section. The fees paid to the
74 microcredential account shall be expended by the office to compensate
75 microcredential providers and for reasonable and necessary expenses
76 for the administration of the virtual platform.

77 (h) There is established an account to be known as the

78 "microcredential account" which shall be a separate, nonlapsing account
79 within the General Fund. The account shall contain any moneys
80 required by law to be deposited in the account. Moneys in the account
81 shall be expended by the Office of Higher Education as set forth in
82 subsection (g) of this section.

83 (i) Not later than January 1, 2023, and annually thereafter, until
84 January 1, 2026, the Office of Higher Education shall submit a report, in
85 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes,
86 to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having
87 cognizance of matters relating to higher education. Such report shall
88 include (1) the catalog of microcredentials available on the virtual
89 platform, highlighting any new microcredentials offered and any
90 microcredentials ceased during the prior year, (2) the number of users
91 who registered on the virtual platform by type of user, (3) the number
92 of students who enrolled and the number of students who completed
93 each microcredential, (4) the results of the student survey conducted
94 pursuant to subsection (f) of this section, and (5) in the final report, the
95 office's decision on whether to establish the pilot program permanently
96 or whether to terminate the pilot program.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	July 1, 2021	New section
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HED *Joint Favorable*