

Labor and Public Employees Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-410

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING PAID INTERNSHIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS.

Vote Date: 3/21/2024

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/12/2024

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Labor & Public Employees Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill expands high school students access to paid internships. This bill is intended to increase experiential learning options among high school students and allow them to learn skills that could be useful to them in their future careers. These types of paid internships have been a valuable tool for uplifting those in low-income communities and has also improved their engagement with their school. By ensuring that the internships are paid it allows students who need to contribute income to their household to participate while meaningful contributing to their future opportunities.

The substitute language changes the minimum pay standards from 85% of the minimum wage to the full minimum wage. This change is intended to allow students of all backgrounds to participate instead of just those who can afford to be paid less than the minimum wage. This change follows requests from both program supporters and businesses who believe that paying the full minimum wage is most fair for the interns and pushes employers to be more invested in the program.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Danté Bartolomeo, Commissioner, Department of Labor: Bartolomeo voices his concerns about the bill stating that the DOL already partners with State Department of Education to offer paid Work Based Learning Opportunities. Bartolomeo thinks that since these programs are already offered that the program would be duplicative and would put an unfunded burden on the Office of Apprenticeship Training and the Workplace Standards Division.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Ed Hawthorne, President, CT AFL-CIO: Hawthorne comments on the bill stating that the AFL-CIO would support the bill if it were amended. Hawthorne speaks on section 1(b) that states that kids 14-15 may work up to 120 hours with approval at 85% of the minimum wage for the first 90 days. Hawthorne is opposed to having students work at a below minimum wage rate for most of the internship. Hawthorne is concerned that this bill along with SB 285 are eroding child labor laws to allow for cheaper labor than normal employees. Hawthorne points to other states rolling back child labor protections and is concerned that CT might be following down the same path. Hawthorne proposes that students taking part in internships be paid the full minimum wage and remove the section that allows the internships to take place in hazardous work environments.

Chris Senecal, Senior Public Policy Officer, Hartford Foundation: Senecal on behalf of the Hartford Foundation voices their support for the bill out of a belief that is important to get hands-on paid experience for youth. The Hartford Foundation believes these programs are vital for building life skills and allow struggling families to have extra income. This also addresses increasing problems that are occurring among high school students in increasing truancy and engaging student in general. This program is used for youth between 14-24 and has employed a significant amount of people of color, the Hartford Foundation wishes to see this program expanded and recommends extra funding. Expanding access to paid internships has shown to be a powerful tool in keeping young people engaged and connected to their schools while developing skills that will be useful later in life.

Anthony Dillulio: Dillulio voices his support of the bill stating that internships are valuable experiences for students. Dillulio discusses his own experiences and those of his peers, pointing out that many internships are unpaid and many of which do not provide the training that would make the time commitment valuable. Dillulio is concerned that the bill does not acknowledge unpaid internships that take advantage of the short-term nature of position and does not define what an intern is entitled for their work. Dillulio reiterates his support for the bill but hopes that these problems will be addressed.

Shannon Marimon, Executive Director, ReadyCT: Marimon on behalf on ReadyCT voices their support of the bill out of a belief that work-based learning is valuable for the development of students. ReadyCT believes that getting hands on experience better positions students for economic mobility while also filling a workforce need into the future. ReadyCT is concerned about allowing students to get paid less than minimum wage however and believes that paying less than minimum wage makes it difficult for students who are apart of low-income families to participate.

Ashley Zane, Senior Public Policy Associate, CBIA: Zane on behalf of the CBIA voices their support of the bill citing the benefit to giving children in undervalued communities in roads into high paying careers. The CBIA notes that giving high school kids the opportunity to take part in experiential learning can help them learn what they wish to do in the future before taking on extreme debt for a career path they are unsure about. Finally, the CBIA advocates that the minimum wage be applied to the internship program to ensure that employers are invested in the program and allowing student of many backgrounds to participate in the program.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None Provided

Reported by: Noah Gulla

Date: 4/3/2024