

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2017

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HOUSE BILL 917

Short Title: Establish Bd of Postsecondary Ed. Credentials. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Blackwell, Fraley, and Iler (Primary Sponsors).

For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Appropriations

April 26, 2017

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE BOARD OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION
3 CREDENTIALS AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO COVER THE OPERATING
4 EXPENSES OF THE BOARD.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 **SECTION 1.** Chapter 116 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new
7 article to read:

8 "Article 36.

9 "Postsecondary Education Credentials.

10 **"§ 116-300. Board of Postsecondary Education Credentials.**

11 (a) Findings. – The General Assembly finds that, in today's economy, opportunities for
12 North Carolina's citizens to reach the middle class with a high school-level education or even
13 less have significantly decreased. To be competitive and obtain better paying jobs that lead to a
14 better quality of life in the State's current and future economy, most citizens will need some
15 type of postsecondary education that qualifies them for employment. The General Assembly
16 recognizes the importance of bringing together potential employers and providers of
17 postsecondary education for the purpose of identifying workforce skills and training needs and
18 developing courses of study and vocational training that meet the standards expected and
19 required by industries, corporations, and other employers. The General Assembly further finds
20 that the establishment of a permanent board with members who are knowledgeable about
21 postsecondary education and workforce training needs will enable providers of postsecondary
22 education to prepare and design training programs that are responsive to workforce needs and
23 that will assist the State's citizens in securing the credentials required to obtain better paying
24 jobs.

25 The General Assembly recognizes that postsecondary education opportunities should be
26 easily available and accessible to all citizens. Therefore, the General Assembly encourages
27 State educators, when designing the method and manner for delivering postsecondary
28 educational programs, to take into account the varying income levels and economic
29 circumstances of the State's citizens, transportation needs, and other unique challenges in both
30 urban and rural areas of the State that affect accessibility to postsecondary education
31 opportunities and to make genuine efforts to accommodate and address those factors.

32 The General Assembly also finds that most employers consider postsecondary credentials
33 such as academic degrees and high-quality, nondegree certifications awarded by institutions of
34 higher education when determining whether a person has the expertise and skills required for a
35 job. However, high-quality credentials may also be obtained through other alternative models



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1 such as open-source online programs, on-the-job training, and military experience. Therefore, it
2 is essential that a system also be devised in which the meaning and validity of postsecondary
3 credentials is clear and understandable to educators, employers, and students and that
4 accurately conveys the knowledge, skills, and training obtained by an individual however and
5 wherever it is obtained.

6 (b) Board established. – There is established the Board of Postsecondary Credentials
7 located administratively within the Department of Administration, but the Board shall exercise
8 all its prescribed powers independently of the Department of Administration. The Board shall
9 consist of the following members:

- 10 (1) The President of The University of North Carolina.
- 11 (2) The President of the State Board of Community Colleges.
- 12 (3) The Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- 13 (4) The Commissioner of Labor.
- 14 (5) The Secretary of Commerce.
- 15 (6) The President of North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities.
- 16 (7) The Chair of the State Board of Proprietary Schools.

17 (c) Purpose. – The purpose of the Board is to review and make recommendations for
18 the development of a Statewide system of postsecondary education that links industry,
19 corporations, and businesses in this State with educators, government, and community
20 organizations to identify workforce skills and training needs and to ensure that appropriate
21 courses of study and vocational training are available to North Carolinians, including those
22 preparing to pursue postsecondary education, enter the workforce, or seeking to update skills
23 and training for purposes of retaining employment and advancing in the workforce.

24 In addition, the Board shall identify alternative ways in which people gain valuable
25 workforce skills and experience, such as on-the-job training, that are not represented by
26 four-year or two-year degrees and the types of credentials used to signify competence of a
27 certain level upon successful completion of the alternative training experience. The Board shall
28 review and make recommendations on those criteria to be used to determine the value of a
29 nondegree credential, the competencies that it represents, and how it should be compared and
30 valued with regard to other types of postsecondary credentials.

31 (d) Duties. – The duties of the Board include the following:

- 32 (1) Recommend State goals and a framework for achieving those goals among
33 educators to ensure that by 2025, the appropriate percentage, as decided by
34 the Board, of the State's adult citizens will hold degrees, certificates, or other
35 high-quality postsecondary credentials. The Board shall divide the
36 responsibility among The University of North Carolina System and the
37 State's Community College System for achieving the goals adopted by the
38 Board. The Board shall periodically review the progress made toward the
39 goals, evaluate the strategies developed and used toward to attain those
40 goals, and may make additional recommendations.
- 41 (2) Identify the credentials that are acceptable for meeting those goals and
42 determine how the responsibility for providing the courses of study and
43 training for those credentials shall be assigned among the State's educators
44 and others. In making these determinations, consideration shall be given to
45 the fact that the individuals who need these courses of study and training are
46 of various economic levels and are also located in rural areas and
47 metropolitan areas across the State. These factors shall be taken into account
48 with regard to the location and delivery of the courses of study and training
49 programs.
- 50 (3) Address the issue of postsecondary credentials, the various levels of skill and
51 knowledge those credentials signify, and how to accurately convey that

1 information to employers, students and trainees, and providers of
2 postsecondary education. The Board shall consider procedures and methods
3 for recognizing skills and training needed in the workforce that an individual
4 may have obtained through military experience, through on-the-job and
5 employee-proved training, or through other life experiences.

6 (e) Chair. – The Board shall elect from the members a chair and a vice-chair for terms
7 of two years. A chair or vice-chair may serve no more than two consecutive terms in that role.

8 (f) Hire staff and consultants. – To the extent of funds available, the Chair of the Board
9 may, with the approval of the Board, hire staff or consultants to assist the Board in carrying out
10 its purpose and duties.

11 (g) Travel and subsistence. – Members, staff, and consultants of the Board shall receive
12 travel and subsistence expenses in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 138-5 or G.S. 138-6,
13 as appropriate.

14 (h) Meeting space. – With the approval of the Legislative Services Commission, space
15 in the Legislative Building and the Legislative Office Building may be made available to the
16 Board.

17 (i) Frequency of meetings and quorum. – The Board shall meet upon the call of the
18 Chair and shall have its first meeting no later than October 1, 2017. The Board shall meet at
19 least quarterly. A majority of the members of the Board shall constitute a quorum for the
20 transaction of business.

21 (j) Reporting requirement. – The Board shall report initially no later than March 1,
22 2018, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee regarding the goals established
23 by the Board pursuant to this section and the progress in meeting those goals and shall report
24 annually thereafter. The report shall include any recommendations by the Board regarding
25 legislation needed to implement this section."

26 **SECTION 2.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
27 Administration the sum of three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) in recurring funds
28 for the 2017-2018 fiscal year and the sum of three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000) in
29 recurring funds for the 2018-2019 fiscal year to cover operating expenses for staff in the
30 Department of Administration to provide support to the Board.

31 **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2017.