STATE OF NEW YORK

3473

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 29, 2021

Introduced by Sen. COONEY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to the creation of an adult high school career accelerator demonstration project

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new article 107 to read as follows:

ARTICLE 107

ADULT HIGH SCHOOL CAREER ACCELERATOR DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Section 5300. Legislative findings.
5301. Definitions.
5302. Adult high school demonstration career accelerator project.
5303. Term of project; option to make permanent.

§ 5300. Legislative findings. Several states have successfully implemented secondary education programs geared towards the unique needs of adult learners and which lead to a high school diploma. By coupling rigorous academic curricula with training programs that lead to credentials for in-demand jobs and extensive wraparound support services, these programs create an adult-oriented learning environment conducive to success. The Legislature hereby declares that a properly structured secondary education program for adult learners would reduce poverty levels by helping such individuals' transition to the workforce or to post-secondary education.

The City of Rochester area has more than thirty-five thousand adults without high school diplomas, contributing to the fact that its poverty rate is higher than in all eighteen "benchmark cities" of similar size and fourth-worst among the seventy-five largest American cities. The child poverty rate in Rochester is fifty and one-half percent. Across

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD05172-01-1

the state, it is estimated there are more than one million five hundred thousand adults without high school diplomas.

§ 5301. Definitions. As used in this article:

1. "Adult high school career accelerator project" or "program" means a private or independent high school registered by the department which provides adult learners with an appropriate academic environment, career credentialing programs and the necessary wraparound services needed to pursue and obtain, subject to satisfactory completion of the requirements set forth within this article, a high school diploma. For purposes of the program, such adult high school accelerator project shall be located within the corporate boundaries of the city of Rochester as defined by the official city map maintained by the city of Rochester.

2. "Adult learner" means an individual over the age of twenty-one who has not earned a high school diploma or its equivalent and who is enrolled in a registered adult high school career accelerator project.

3. "Operator" means a private nonprofit entity that establishes an adult high school career accelerator project pursuant to this article.

4. "Wraparound services" means individualized services, excluding regular school programs and services, that are provided to the adult learner and the adult learner's family, and may include, but not be limited to, child care, transportation, housing referrals, mental health services, crisis intervention services, substance abuse and treatment services, and legal aid.

§ 5302. Adult high school demonstration career accelerator project. 1. There is hereby created under the authority and supervision of the department an adult high school career accelerator demonstration project, the purpose of which is to establish a pathway for adults who did not graduate from high school to earn a traditional high school diploma and one or more workforce credentials or industry certifications, as well as the potential to earn postsecondary education credits.

2. The department shall create a standardized application process under which potential operators may seek to register an adult high school career accelerator demonstration project. The application process shall require, at a minimum, potential operators to provide:

(a) information about the qualifications of the potential operator;

(b) a minimum of one million dollars to the project;

(c) information about the facility which will house the adult high school career accelerator demonstration project;

(d) information about the proposed curriculum, assessment procedures, performance standards, and wraparound services;

(e) a proposed budget and explanation of how the potential school will be financed;

(f) a description of any programs or partnerships with organizations or businesses for providing job skills, industry certifications, or higher education credits;

(g) plans for working with adult learners with disabilities and English Language Learners; and

(h) information about the advisory board of the adult high school career accelerator demonstration project seeking to be registered.

3. The program shall:

(a) adopt a curriculum that is consistent with New York state learning standards but may be different than a regular school program in terms of location, length of school day, pace for completion, and instructional activities;

(b) not issue a traditional high school diploma to an adult learner unless such adult learner has satisfied the minimum requirements set by the department;

(c) consult with the New York state department of labor and may partner with New York state's community colleges or other entities to provide career and occupational educational courses that lead to industry certifications, licenses, or credentials;

(d) provide all their services to adult learners at no cost to the adult learners;

(e) provide face-to-face classroom instruction on a year-round basis with class offerings in the morning, afternoon, and evenings and may offer accelerated terms; and

(f) assign a life coach to every adult learner.

4. Under the program, the department may approve additional locations, each of which may enroll a maximum of three hundred fifty adult learners.

5. The adult high school career accelerator demonstration project shall have an advisory board which shall consist of at least five members, at least one of which shall be appointed by the department.

6. No later than October first of each year, the operator under this program shall provide the department with a report, the form and content of which shall be determined by the department.

7. An adult high school career accelerator program established under this article shall not be considered a public school for state aid purposes; however, adult high school career accelerator locations registered pursuant to this article shall be eligible to receive public funding in the form of specific appropriations, state and federal grants, and any other available resources. Adult high schools may also accept private contributions.

8. The department shall adopt rules and regulations necessary to administer the program authorized by this article.

§ 5303. Term of project; option to make permanent. 1. The adult high school career accelerator demonstration project authorized by this article shall remain in effect for a minimum of five years after the effective date of this article.

2. If the department determines that the program is serving its intended purpose, the adult high school career accelerator demonstration project shall, subject to the permission and authority of the department, become permanent and shall be renamed the adult high school career accelerator program. Such program may be extended to additional regions of the state to operators who meet the requirements under the program. The department shall make such determination in consultation with the operators, the members of the operators' advisory boards, the department of labor, and other relevant stakeholders, no later than six months prior to the end of the five-year period.

§ 2. This act shall take effect immediately.