STATE OF NEW YORK

1089

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 8, 2025

Introduced by Sen. RAMOS -- 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 establishing a workplace readiness week for secondary school students

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

Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "youth workplace readiness act".

§ 2. Legislative findings and intent. It is the intent of the Legislature that New York pupils enter the workforce with a strong understanding of their rights as workers, as well as their explicit rights as employed minors. It is further the intent of the Legislature to equip pupils with this knowledge to protect them from retaliation and discrimination, to ensure that these young workers receive all wages and benefits to which they are entitled, to empower them to refuse unsafe work when necessary, and to prepare them to assert their labor rights whenever these rights are threatened.

The Legislature hereby finds and declares that young New Yorkers must enter the workforce having received a thorough education on their right to join or organize a union at their workplace. It is further the intent of the Legislature that secondary schools present state-approved apprenticeship programs as a path towards a living wage career for all pupils.

§ 3. The education law is amended by adding a new section 819 to read as follows:

§ 819. Workplace readiness week. 1. The week of each year that includes May first shall be known as "workplace readiness week". All secondary schools shall annually observe that week by providing information to students on their rights as workers. The topics covered shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

(a) local, state, and federal laws regarding each of the following issues:

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

LBD03200-01-5

(i) child labor;
(ii) wage and hour protections;
(iii) worker safety;
(iv) workers' compensation;
(v) paid sick leave;
(vi) prohibitions against retaliation; and
(vii) the right to organize a union in the workplace;
(b) the labor movement's role in winning the protections and benefits described in paragraph (a) of this subdivision;
(c) an introduction to state-approved apprenticeship programs in New York, how to access them, and how they can provide an alternative career path for those who do not attend university or college;
(d) an introduction to the civil service system in New York and the process of testing and applying for civil service jobs; and
(e) an introduction to financial literacy which shall include, but not be limited to, banking basics, budgeting, and filing taxes.
2. For students in grades eleven and twelve, the observances required by subdivision one of this section shall be integrated into the regular school program, consistent with the history/social science curriculum, but may also include special events after regular school hours. This integration is encouraged, but not required, to occur during workplace readiness week.
3. Any minor seeking working papers in order to be employed in the state shall be issued, before or at the time of receiving such working papers, a document clearly explaining basic labor rights extended to workers. Topics covered in this document shall include, but not be limited to, those topics identified in paragraph (a) of subdivision one of this section. Such document shall be produced, and made available, in any language spoken by five percent or more of the pupils enrolled in any one school or, if requested, in the primary language of any student and shall express these labor rights in plain, natural terminology easily understood by the student. The document shall be in a physical form but may also be provided electronically. The New York state school of industrial and labor relations at Cornell university is encouraged to produce, with input from bona fide labor organizations, a draft template for the document to be provided to minors seeking working papers pursuant to this subdivision, including the translations specified.
4. The commissioner shall annually send a written notice, detailing the requirements of workplace readiness week and how teachers may access related instructional materials and other resources, to every secondary school in the state, at least one month before workplace readiness week.

§ 4. This act shall take effect immediately.