

**Hearing Testimony, Kelly Caufield
Colorado Succeeds
HB20-1002, College Credit for Work Experience
Senate Education Committee Hearing**

Thank you, members of the committee. My name is Kelly Caufield and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs for Colorado Succeeds, which is a nonpartisan coalition of business leaders committed to improving the state's education system. I am testifying today in strong support of HB20-1002. I want to express a special thank you to the Senate sponsors, Senator Rachel Zenzinger and Senator Tammy Story for their leadership.

The proposed legislation would allow students and members of the current workforce to earn postsecondary credit for demonstrating competencies gained through work-related experience, such as work-based learning in high school through apprenticeships. This would be accomplished by implementing a statewide plan that awards postsecondary academic credit for work experience.

As business leaders dedicated to improving education in Colorado, we believe this bill is a critical step towards an education system that is more permeable and agile. We aspire to a future where all of Colorado's learners develop transferable competencies that will prepare them for a future we cannot predict, and where the education system is responsive to the diverse needs and interests of all learners. The legislation would ensure there are multiple high-quality pathways for learners, of all ages, who seek to accelerate postsecondary credential completion.

Through our partnerships with educators statewide, we are laser focused on opportunities to further expand career-connected learning. The legislation would increase the value of work-based learning for students because the experiences would be tied to postsecondary credit. It also creates a natural framework for how work experience can count as postsecondary credit, reducing the burden on employers who are interested in participating in work-based learning.

As we work toward a more agile education system, we applaud the provisions that allow industry a seat at the table to ensure institutions of higher education are focused on ways to award credit for knowledge and competencies learned at the workplace, including a prioritization of the fastest growing industries in the state, based on the annual Colorado Talent Pipeline report.

In addition, this legislation would require a framework for how industry credentials earned in high school could count towards postsecondary academic credit, accelerating credential completion. Because of the state's commitment to providing incentives for high quality credentials for high school students, more than 16,000 students have earned industry credentials, participated in work-based learning, or completed relevant courses, related to in-demand industries. The legislation before you today is important because these industry credentials could now result in postsecondary academic credit, putting more students on track to persist and attain additional postsecondary credentials after high school.

In closing, on behalf of the board of directors of Colorado Succeeds, I ask for a yes vote today. Thank you.

June 6, 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the House Bill 20-1002. This is an issue that is incredibly important to me and to the team at CareerWise Colorado where I serve as the Chief Program Officer.

CareerWise's program offers three-year apprenticeships for high-school students in career pathways such as information technology, financial services, business operations and advanced manufacturing. CareerWise apprentices undergo a rigorous training plan to skill-up in alignment with competencies that are created by industry, ensuring that the skills they're developing are in-demand in the job market and set them up for a mid-wage, mid-level career.

Our youth apprenticeship system is a great example of college-level learning happening outside the traditional higher education classroom. Our apprentices recognize that the learning and up-skilling they'll need to build the career they want will be cyclical. Many apprentices will leverage the apprenticeship as a stepping-stone to degree attainment. Credit for prior learning would be a game changer for our apprentices.

- Credit for prior learning eliminates redundancy. Youth apprentices will have received immense amounts of rigorous training in a high-demand field. Credit for prior learning will eliminate redundancy for students who would otherwise have to invest time and money in course material they have already mastered.
- It creates clarity and efficiency. Currently a youth apprentice with a goal of degree attainment will have to undergo a confusing, time-consuming process that will vary from school-to-school in order to try and receive credit for the learning they achieve as an apprentice. This is time consuming for the student who is forced to shop around to maximize the credit they can earn, and for the institution that is having to serve each student individually.
- It helps students make informed educational choices. A youth apprentice exiting our program, or student considering youth apprenticeship, is making major decisions about their education and future career prospects. Inherently these are difficult decisions to make and the stakes are high. These students are forced to make these decisions without the full picture. Because there is not a system for prior learning assessment, these students cannot not have clarity on how the training and work-based learning of their apprenticeship will build toward degree attainment. This bill would create transparency for students, allowing them to have the insight they need to make informed decisions.

- It opens access to students in new ways and lowers the cost of an education. The staggering cost of higher education is the reality of our current system. We all know this can create insurmountable access issues for some students. Work-based learning allows students to earn a salary while they learn and develop essential, high-demand skills. Similarly, to concurrent enrollment, creating a standardized way for students to obtain credit for their college-level learning will offset some of the financial burden.

I hope that this information is helpful in the Committee's consideration. I urge you to support House Bill 1002.

Respectfully submitted,



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June 6, 2020

Testimony on House Bill 20-1002, College Credit for Work Experience
Dr. Chris Rasmussen, Director of Academic Affairs, Department of Higher Education
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Dear Members of the Colorado Senate:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony in support of House Bill 20-1002, College Credit for Work Experience. While the circumstances the state now faces are dramatically different from when this bill was originally introduced in the House Education Committee, the work outlined in the bill is arguably more important than ever. The bill remains a legislative priority for the Department as it furthers our work to contain the cost of college by helping students get academic credit for their prior learning. This credit saves students money and accelerates their degree completion, advancing their success and helping to drive the economy of our state.

This bill will help students in two ways. The first is by awarding transferable college credit for learning that has been validated by a professional license or by an industry-awarded credential or certificate. The second way is by exploring ways for students to “test out” of any course in the undergraduate curriculum based on past learning from employment, internships, or self-study.

According to Lumina Foundation, over 3 million working adults hold a job-related certification as their highest postsecondary credential. These certifications are often awarded by a business, a trade association, or another industry group. Examples include:

- Computing and informatics certifications through Cisco or Microsoft;
- Accounting and banking certifications through the American Institute for Banking or H & R Block; and
- Management and Leadership certifications from well-established training programs at Fortune 500 companies.

These and other awards affirm *learning*—learning that is often similar to what is intended through general education courses or through courses in the academic major. With this bill, the Department will work with the General Education Council to map industry credentials and professional licenses to the GT Pathways curriculum and other transferrable courses, in much the same way the Department worked with the Council in mapping learning outcomes from military training and occupations, prioritizing areas of highest workforce demand in the process. However, with the considerable staff time and required expertise to complete the work, the Department can only



proceed if it secures sufficient grants, gifts, and donations. The Department is encouraged by preliminary discussions with foundations about funding opportunities.

The second way this bill can help students is by expanding “test out” options. Institutions are currently required by statute to give students the opportunity to “test out” of general education courses. As amended in January, the bill would have expanded this option to all courses in the undergraduate curriculum where a student’s prior learning can be determined through examination, portfolio review, or some other assessment.

Given the costs to institutions associated with developing robust portfolio review and assessment processes, the Department supports the recent amendment to the bill in the House to move from mandated implementation of the “test out” option by January 1, 2021, to a study of the feasibility and costs of such an initiative, with a report to be delivered by the Department by September 1, 2021. The Department is committed to doing this work without the contingency of gifts, grants, and donations. The work is well aligned with the Commission on Higher Education master plan and thus readily incorporated into our plan of work for FY21 without excess or undue burden. Additionally, the requests to be made of institutions for data or information for the study will not be outside the realm of normal and customary requests we make of institutions to report data, share best practices, and engage in collaborative problem solving in the name of advancing student success.

As Representative McLachlan stated in a January article in the Pagosa Springs Sun, this bill “can help students avoid spending time and money on unnecessary prerequisite and foundational courses and expedite their path toward a degree, making their overall higher education journey shorter and more affordable.” The Department couldn’t agree more. The Department wishes to thank the bill sponsors—Representatives McLachlan and Baisley, and Senators Zenzinger and Story—as well as Representative Geitner, who with Representative McLachlan helped shepherd an earlier version of this bill through this committee during the 2019 legislative session.

Please vote yes on this bill.

