2026 Legislative Session Review

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Presentation Agenda

Staff update for Workforce Board members on the following topics related to the recently concluded 2026 Legislative Session:

- Workforce Board 2026 Legislative Agenda results.
- Workforce system partners: Key Session takeaways.
  - *Thank you to partners for populating this list!*
- Review other related provisos and items of interest.

Final Budget – Board Leg Agenda (1/3)

Support initiatives that respond to **changes in federal programs** to support Washington residents in **meeting expanded work requirements** and remain enrolled in critical basic supports to receive food (SNAP) and healthcare (Medicaid).

- Funding for DSHS, Health Care Authority, and Health Benefits Exchange to develop a work requirement verification hub.
- No Wrong Door project buildout not funded. However…
  - Specific language for DSHS to collaborate on the hub with the Workforce Board, among other partners. Language for the other two agencies called for collaboration with "other workforce development partners."
- Increase of $3M for WorkSource Integrated Technology (WIT) project.

Final Budget – Board Leg Agenda (2/3)

- **Preserve investments** in postsecondary programs and associated student supports.
  - Economic Security for All (EcSA): Additional $1M for FY27.
    - Fund source change from ESD Administrative Account to WIOA Reserve funds for FY27.
  - Community Reinvestment Program (CRP): Maintains funding of $60M for the 25-27 biennium. CRP legislation (HB 2532) passed into law.
- **Restore funding** for discrete programs that meet specific industry needs such as **Core Plus and wraparound supports for state registered apprentices**.
  - Passage of HB 2492 – Behavioral health and wellness training for building trades apprenticeships.

Final Budget – Board Leg Agenda (3/3)

Support initiatives that help to **inform secondary students about their options for multiple pathways** to education and career opportunities.

- OSPI request for an expansion to additional school districts of the High School and Beyond Plan Platform was partially funded. Includes staff support at OSPI and technical assistance for schools.

- Automatic eligibility for WA College Grant for Passport to Careers recipients.
  - SB 5963, WA Student Achievement Council request bill, signed into law by the Governor on 3/14.

Workforce Partners – Key Session Takeaways

- Board staff surveyed organizations representing the members of the Board to identify their top takeaways from Session.
- Each organization was given an opportunity to share details on budget items, bills passed/not passed, and any other themes.
- Takeaways are organized by respondent type and theme.

Session Takeaways: Local Workforce Boards

- Economic Security for All (EcSA) received an additional appropriation of $1M at ESD from the Governor's Reserve Fund (federal).
  - Concerns about one-time funds, funding shifts, and differing administrative requirements for implementation between funding sources.
- Community Reinvestment Program – passage of HB 2523 reinforced long-term stability and accountability.
  - Program funding was maintained at the $60M/biennium level.

Session Takeways: Workforce Agencies (1/2)

Education/Postsecondary Education

- Funding for student supports such as universal K-12 school meals and exam fees for low-income students.
- Two HSBP alignment bills passed into law.
- Funding reductions/elimination:
  - Base budget reductions.
  - 33% reduction to Transition to Kindergarten.
  - Elimination of industry-specific Centers of Excellence.
- Running Start FTE reduction in 27-28 school year (one-time).
- SBCTC must study and recommend reductions in redundant or non-student-supporting expenses (due 12/1/26).

Session Takeways: Workforce Agencies (2/2)

Human Services/Economic Development

- Investments in direct service and wraparound programs in the operating and capital budgets.
- Infrastructure and implementation funding for H.R. 1 work requirements.
- Funding to develop a state economic development strategy at Commerce.
- Community Reinvestment Program officially established in statute (prev. in budget-only) and funded.
- Funding to expand programs serving WIOA-eligible participants.
  - Includes capacity growth in adult basic education and integrated education and training pathways.

Session Takeways: Business

- Concerns about reductions in education funding, especially in CTE – limiting access to high-quality supplies, materials, and summer programs.
- Disappointment about lack of funding for programs such as Core Plus.
- Millionaires' Tax (SB 6346).
- Limited engagement with employers on their on-the-ground needs prior to program offerings and implementation.

Session Takeaways: Labor

- Required behavioral health training for building trades apprenticeships (HB 2492, right).
- Legislation focused on **workplace protections** – protecting immigrant and domestic workers; prohibiting non-compete agreements.
- Millionaires' Tax (SB 6346).
- Child Care Workforce Standards Board legislation passed into law (HB 1128).
- Concerns about employment outlook and apprentice opportunities.

Other Bills/Provisos of Interest

- Elimination of funding for the Workforce Board's clean energy technology workforce program (CETWAC). Funding ends 6/30/26.
- Funding to the WA State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to study to evaluate increases in college-going rates in other states.
- Higher education and workforce development landscape analysis (ESD budget, 200K from Governor's Reserve funds).
- HB 2410 – Establishing a Commercial Truck Safety and Education Council (Governor signed 3/16).
  - Workforce Board membership.

QUESTIONS?

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