

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 549

BY REPRESENTATIVE BERAULT

1 AN ACT

2 To enact Chapter 11-E of Title 23 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950, to be
3 comprised of R.S. 23:1861 through 1866, relative to workforce development; to
4 create the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program; to create the Bayou
5 Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund; to provide for program awards; to provide for
6 annual reporting; to provide definitions; to provide for enforcement; to provide for
7 rulemaking; and to provide for related matters.

8 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

9 Section 1. Chapter 11-E of Title 23 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes of 1950,
10 comprised of R.S. 23:1861 through 1866, is hereby enacted to read as follows:

11 CHAPTER 11-E. BAYOU GROWTH OPPORTUNITY WORKFORCE PROGRAM

12 §1861. Definitions

13 For the purpose of this Chapter, the following terms have the meanings
14 ascribed to them:

15 (1) "Approved plan" means a training plan submitted as provided in R.S.
16 23:1863 and which is approved by the department.

17 (2) "Awardee" means a qualified employer that is awarded funds in
18 accordance with R.S. 23:1863.

19 (3) "Department" means Louisiana Works.

20 (4) "Fund" means the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund created
21 in R.S. 23:1862.

22 (5) "Program" means the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program
23 established in accordance with R.S. 23:1863.

24 (6) "Qualified employee" means an employee of a qualified employer and
25 who is a United States citizen or otherwise authorized to work in the United States;
26 is employed by a qualified employer when training under an approved plan begins;

1 works primarily in this state and for whom the qualified employer pays all applicable
2 taxes; and is, as determined by the department, a permanent, full-time employee.

3 (7) "Qualified employer" means an employer that the department determines
4 has a physical presence in this state and is in compliance with the state's employment
5 and tax laws.

6 (8) "Qualified training provider" means an entity that is qualified to provide
7 the training required under an approved plan, as determined by the department. A
8 qualified training provider shall include but is not limited to any of the following:

9 (a) A community or technical college as designated or provided for in R.S.
10 17:3217.1.

11 (b) A public postsecondary education institution in accordance with R.S.
12 17:3351.

13 (c) A licensed proprietary school as defined in R.S. 17:3140.1(6).

14 (d) A private training provider on the department's qualified training
15 provider list.

16 (e) A registered apprenticeship training center.

17 (f) A qualified employer.

18 (g) A vendor that provides training for the operation of equipment or systems
19 for which the vendor is the provider.

20 §1862. Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund; creation; deposit of money or
21 other assets; administration; expenditures

22 A. There is hereby established in the state treasury as a special fund the
23 Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Fund, hereafter referred to in this Section as
24 the "fund".

25 B. After allocation of money to the Bond Security and Redemption Fund as
26 provided in Article VII, Section 9(B) of the Constitution of Louisiana, the treasurer
27 shall deposit into the fund all donations, gifts, and grants received by the state for the
28 program as well as any other monies which may be provided for the program by law.

29 C. Monies in the fund shall be invested by the treasurer in the same manner
30 as monies in the state general fund and interest earned on investment of the monies

1 shall be credited to the fund. All unexpended and unencumbered monies in the fund
 2 at the end of the fiscal year shall remain in the fund.

3 D. Monies in the fund shall be appropriated to the department and used
 4 solely to fund the payment of awards to awardees and for the administration of the
 5 program.

6 §1863. Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program; creation; awards for
 7 workforce training; application criteria

8 A. The purpose of the Bayou Growth Opportunity Workforce Program
 9 herein referred to as "the program" is to provide competitive awards to qualified
 10 employers for workforce training, including but not limited to talent enhancement,
 11 increasing worker productivity, development of worker skills, leadership and
 12 management training, and worker retention.

13 B. The department shall operate the program and coordinate the
 14 implementation of the program with workforce development boards. The
 15 department and the workforce development boards shall conduct outreach to inform
 16 employers about the program.

17 C.(1) Upon the request of a qualified employer, a workforce development
 18 board staff member shall conduct an evaluation with the employer to determine
 19 whether a skills gap exists and if a qualified training provider is available to provide
 20 the instruction needed.

21 (2) The staff member shall identify any federal or other funding sources that
 22 may be obtained for the required training in lieu of an award through the program
 23 before assisting the employer with an application.

24 D.(1) A workforce development board shall submit to the department an
 25 application for a program award on behalf of a qualified employer or on behalf of
 26 two or more qualified employers for a shared training program.

27 (2) The department shall work with the workforce development boards to
 28 create an application for an award.

29 (3) An application developed in accordance with this Section shall include
 30 a requirement that a qualified employer shall submit a training plan.

1 E. The department shall develop criteria to evaluate applications and
 2 proposed training plans and post the criteria on its website. The criteria shall require
 3 that the training plan shall meet, at a minimum, all of the following requirements:

4 (1) Be for no longer than six months in duration, unless the department
 5 determines an extension is appropriate.

6 (2) Conclude within a year after the date the department approves the award,
 7 unless the department determines that an extension is necessary.

8 (3) Be conducted by a qualified training provider.

9 (4) Not be for basic training.

10 (5) Result in a credential for a skill that is transferable and recognized by the
 11 industry.

12 F. The department shall coordinate with the workforce development boards
 13 on the creation of a uniform training agreement to be used by awardees. The
 14 agreement shall include the responsibilities of the awardee and any other
 15 requirements the department considers necessary.

16 G. Any of the following changes made by an awardee to an approved plan
 17 shall not require approval by the department:

18 (1) Changes to the dates of the training, if the new dates will not result in the
 19 training concluding later than a year after the date the department approves the
 20 award.

21 (2) A change in the training provider if the alternate provider is qualified and
 22 the content of the training does not change.

23 (3) Changes to which employees will receive the training, provided the
 24 employees are qualified.

25 §1864. Program awards; eligible expenses; remittance to department

26 A. Expenses for which program awards shall be used for, include but are not
 27 limited to any of the following:

28 (1) The actual cost of classroom training, including instructor costs and
 29 instructional materials.

1 (2) The actual cost of on-the-job training, including wage reimbursement,
2 as determined by the department.

3 (3) Other costs determined by the department to be relevant to the training.

4 B. An awardee shall not expend any amount of the program award on any
5 of the following:

6 (1) Equipment, including tools and computers.

7 (2) Licensing fees.

8 (3) Curriculum development.

9 (4) Qualified employee travel costs.

10 (5) Online training subscriptions.

11 (6) Training that begins before the date of the award, unless approved by the
12 department.

13 (7) Offsetting tuition reimbursement.

14 C. The amount expended shall not exceed two thousand dollars per qualified
15 employee or apprentice.

16 D. If less than the full amount of an award is utilized by a qualified
17 employer, the remaining amount of the award shall be remitted back to the
18 department and returned to the fund.

19 §1865. Annual report

20 The department shall by March first of each year provide a written report on
21 the program to the House and Senate committees on labor and industrial relations
22 and the House Committee on Appropriations and the Senate Committee on Finance.
23 The report shall include all of the following information from the immediately
24 preceding fiscal year:

25 (1) The total amount of funding awarded, organized by industry and region.

26 (2) The total number of applications received and the total number of
27 applications approved, organized by industry and region.

28 (3) All of the following information for each awardee:

29 (a) The name of the awardee.

30 (b) The amount of the award received by the awardee.

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1 (c) The type of training approved for the awardee.

2 (d) The number of qualified employees who completed the approved
3 training.

4 (4) Any other relevant information, as determined by the department,
5 including but not limited to all of the following:

6 (a) Total number of individuals hired and trained.

7 (b) Total number of apprenticeships or jobs created.

8 §1866. Rules

9 The department shall enforce this Chapter and may promulgate rules and
10 regulations in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, R.S. 49:950 et
11 seq., necessary for the implementation of the provisions of this Chapter.

12 Section 2. The criteria required by the provisions of R.S. 23:1863(E) as enacted by
13 Section 1 of this Act shall be due beginning no later than July 1, 2028.

14 Section 3. The annual report required by the provisions of R.S. 23:1865 as enacted
15 by Section 1 of this Act shall begin the March first succeeding July 1, 2028.

16 Section 4. This Act shall become effective upon signature by the governor or, if not
17 signed by the governor, upon expiration of the time for bills to become law without signature
18 by the governor, as provided by Article III, Section 18 of the Constitution of Louisiana. If
19 vetoed by the governor and subsequently approved by the legislature, this Act shall become
20 effective on the day following such approval.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: _____