



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Workforce Transformation is Moving Through the Capitol

OKLAHOMA CITY (May 24, 2023) – A plan to transform workforce development in Oklahoma is one step closer to becoming law. The Oklahoma State Senate passed Senate Bill 621 on Wednesday. The bill creates the Oklahoma Workforce Commission, an entity led by private sector business leaders and government officials who will direct the state's workforce development strategy, as well as administer and oversee funding allocated by the legislature for workforce development initiatives.

SB621, authored by Sen. Adam Pugh and Rep. Brian Hill, is designed to break down silos and limit duplication in the current workforce pipeline, ultimately leading to more direct and efficient completion of education pathways. That means more skilled workers for state businesses and better paying careers for Oklahomans.

"We must invest in our human capital and create a workforce to meet our needs as we grow. This will require having an entity at the state level that can coordinate our entire workforce development system, including our state agencies, career techs, higher education system, the nonprofit sector, and our public and private businesses and industries. We must all get on the same page and work toward a common goal, which this commission will help accomplish," said Pugh.

After being amended in conference committee, the bill passed with overwhelming support, 34-10, in the Senate. It now moves to the House for consideration.

"It's really exciting because I know in my heart that at that moment we're going to shift our state forward, a leap and a bound," said Hill. "I believe decades from now, this is the moment we will look back at as a pivotal shift for our workforce, for our families and for all Oklahomans."

Chad Warmington, president and CEO of The State Chamber, is a leading proponent of revitalizing the workforce and supports creating the Oklahoma Workforce Commission.

"Many are engaged in workforce development, but nobody owns workforce. We consistently hear from our members that we have a significant workforce problem in Oklahoma. SB621 is the first step forward to fix the pipeline, so Oklahomans and the businesses employing them can grow and flourish," said Warmington.

"SB621 means young people getting new and better jobs. It also will make it easier for folks who have been in the same career for a while to have opportunities to upskill and go do something else. This is about pathways. This is about a brighter future for Oklahoma," said Rick Nagel, managing partner at Acorn Growth and an OU Regent.

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