

Second Regular Session  
Seventy-fourth General Assembly  
STATE OF COLORADO

INTRODUCED

LLS NO. 24-0628.02 Anna Petrini x5497

SENATE BILL 24-143

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SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Coleman and Zenzinger,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Herod,

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Senate Committees  
Education

House Committees

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A BILL FOR AN ACT

101 CONCERNING CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT TOOLS, AND, IN CONNECTION  
102 THEREWITH, INTEGRATING FRAMEWORKS FOR NONDEGREE  
103 CREDENTIAL EVALUATION AND CLASSIFICATION INTO STATE  
104 EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE SYSTEMS AND ALIGNING  
105 STACKABLE CREDENTIAL PATHWAYS AND APPRENTICESHIP  
106 PROGRAMS WITH INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION STANDARDS.

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Bill Summary

*(Note: This summary applies to this bill as introduced and does not reflect any amendments that may be subsequently adopted. If this bill passes third reading in the house of introduction, a bill summary that applies to the reengrossed version of this bill will be available at <http://leg.colorado.gov>.)*

Current law requires the department of higher education

Shading denotes HOUSE amendment. Double underlining denotes SENATE amendment.  
*Capital letters or bold & italic numbers indicate new material to be added to existing law.*  
*Dashes through the words or numbers indicate deletions from existing law.*

(department) and other higher education institutions to develop a framework for evaluating the quality of nondegree credentials. The bill formally recognizes the resulting quality and in-demand nondegree credentials framework (quality nondegree credentials framework) as the primary tool for assessing the quality of nondegree credentials offered in the state.

The bill requires the department to collaborate with various agencies to ensure the effective integration of the quality nondegree credentials framework within the state's education and workforce systems and to evaluate nondegree credentials offered through state-recognized programs to ensure the credentials meet the framework's quality standards. At least annually, the department shall supply a list of nondegree credential programs that meet the framework's quality standards for inclusion in the Colorado talent report and a credential registry endorsed by the state.

The department shall engage state agencies, educational institutions, international organizations, and other stakeholders to study and make recommendations about the adoption of the international standard classification of education (ISCED) as the state's standard framework for classifying nondegree credentials and ISCED's wider application in the state's education and workforce systems. The recommendations must include a process for assigning ISCED equivalency levels to nondegree credentials included in stackable credential pathways and apprenticeship programs. The bill requires the department to report its findings and recommendations on or before January 1, 2025.

Current law requires the department to create stackable credential pathways in growing industries. The bill requires the department to align the stackable credential pathways with appropriate ISCED equivalency levels on or before January 1, 2025.

The bill requires the office of future of work to coordinate with various agencies to determine ISCED equivalency levels for each apprenticeship program registered on and after January 1, 2025. The office of future of work shall then determine ISCED equivalency levels for each apprenticeship program registered before January 1, 2025.

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1 *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Colorado:*

2           **SECTION 1. Legislative declaration.** (1) The general assembly  
3 finds and declares that:

4           (a) The strength and prosperity of Colorado's economy hinges on  
5 economic mobility and educational opportunities for all Coloradans and

1 on the cultivation of a skilled workforce. According to the 2022 Colorado  
2 talent pipeline report, 91.4 percent of tier one top jobs and 70.4 percent  
3 of tier two top jobs in the state required some form of postsecondary  
4 education beyond high school, including traditional academic degrees, as  
5 well as industry certifications, badges, sub-baccalaureate certificates,  
6 professional licenses, and apprenticeships.

7 (b) Traditional undergraduate and graduate degree programs are  
8 the foundation of our postsecondary training system. However, they  
9 cannot fully meet Colorado's evolving skilled workforce needs.  
10 Nondegree credentials provide a valuable and complementary approach  
11 to bridging the skills gap. They offer learners a practical and expedited  
12 pathway to acquire the precise skills that employers urgently require to  
13 meet their immediate workforce needs.

14 (c) In 2021, Credential Engine reported 967,734 unique secondary  
15 and postsecondary education credentials in the United States. Existing  
16 accreditation and regulation systems provide quality assurance for degree  
17 programs but, with the exception of sub-baccalaureate certifications, do  
18 not take a sufficiently holistic approach to quality assurance for  
19 nondegree credentials. Existing systems fail to validate the legitimacy of  
20 nondegree credentials, specify how they relate to degree programs, and  
21 fail to indicate whether they develop in-demand skills that lead to good  
22 jobs. This places a considerable burden on both learners and employers  
23 who lack the time, expertise, and resources to verify the legitimacy and  
24 quality of these credentials. As a result, employers and learners continue  
25 to rely heavily on traditional degrees while quality nondegree credentials  
26 remain underused and undervalued.

27 (d) To address this need, Colorado requires a system that brings

1 quality assurance, clarity, and order to the complex landscape of both  
2 nondegree and traditional degree credentials by validating high-quality  
3 credentials and indicating the level of training or skill mastery they  
4 deliver; and

5 (e) With the help of a quality assurance framework and an  
6 internationally recognized standard classification system, Colorado  
7 employers can more easily assess candidate qualifications and skill  
8 profiles and align their hiring practices and policies with proper  
9 recognition of nondegree credentials. Knowing their chosen program  
10 carries validation, legitimacy, and value in the labor market empowers  
11 Colorado learners to make informed decisions about their careers.

12 (2) Therefore, the general assembly declares that the  
13 implementation of a quality nondegree credentials framework and a  
14 standard classification system is an essential step toward an equitable  
15 economy, economic mobility, workforce development, and clarity in  
16 educational and training attainment.

17 **SECTION 2.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 23-5-145.8 as  
18 follows:

19 **23-5-145.8. Credential quality standards - report - definitions.**

20 (1) AS USED IN THIS SECTION, UNLESS THE CONTEXT OTHERWISE  
21 REQUIRES:

22 (a) "APPRENTICESHIP CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION" MEANS A  
23 CERTIFICATE AWARDED TO AN APPRENTICE IN RECOGNITION OF THE  
24 SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF AN APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM.

25 (b) "COLORADO TALENT REPORT" MEANS THE REPORT PREPARED  
26 PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-46.3-103.

27 (c) "DEPARTMENT" MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER

1 EDUCATION CREATED AND EXISTING PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-1-114.

2 (d) "INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION" MEANS A CREDENTIAL AWARDED  
3 BY AN INDUSTRY-RECOGNIZED THIRD PARTY OR INDUSTRY-GOVERNING  
4 BOARD BASED ON AN INDIVIDUAL DEMONSTRATING BY ASSESSMENT THAT  
5 THE INDIVIDUAL HAS ACQUIRED THE DESIGNATED KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS,  
6 AND ABILITIES RELATED TO A SPECIFIC OCCUPATION OR SKILL. INDUSTRY  
7 CERTIFICATIONS MAY BE TIME-LIMITED DEPENDENT UPON THE  
8 OCCUPATION OR INDUSTRY.

9 (e) "INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION"  
10 OR "ISCED" MEANS A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANIZING  
11 EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT APPLIES UNIFORM AND  
12 INTERNATIONALLY AGREED-UPON CLASSIFICATIONS TO FACILITATE  
13 COMPARISONS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS ACROSS  
14 COUNTRIES.

15 (f) "NONDEGREE CREDENTIAL" MEANS A POSTSECONDARY  
16 CERTIFICATE, APPRENTICESHIP CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION,  
17 PROFESSIONAL LICENSE, OR INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION.

18 (g) "POSTSECONDARY CERTIFICATE" MEANS A CREDENTIAL  
19 AWARDED BY AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AT AN  
20 UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL BASED ON COMPLETION OF ALL REQUIREMENTS  
21 FOR A PROGRAM OF STUDY, INCLUDING COURSEWORK AND EXAMS.  
22 POSTSECONDARY CERTIFICATES ARE NOT TIME-LIMITED AND DO NOT  
23 REQUIRE RENEWAL. "POSTSECONDARY CERTIFICATE" DOES NOT INCLUDE  
24 A DEGREE OR A CREDENTIAL AWARDED BY AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER  
25 EDUCATION AFTER COMPLETION OF A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN THE SAME  
26 PATHWAY.

27 (h) "QUALITY NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS FRAMEWORK" MEANS

1 THE QUALITY AND IN-DEMAND NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS FRAMEWORK  
2 DEVELOPED PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-5-145.6 (2) TO ASSESS  
3 CERTIFICATIONS, OCCUPATIONAL LICENSES, APPRENTICESHIP CERTIFICATES  
4 OF COMPLETION, NON-CREDIT CERTIFICATES, MICRO-CREDENTIALS, AND  
5 SUB-BACCALAUREATE FOR-CREDIT CERTIFICATES AND ESTABLISHES A  
6 RUBRIC FOR EVALUATING CREDENTIALS IN STATE-RECOGNIZED PROGRAMS.

7 (i) "STACKABLE CREDENTIAL PATHWAY" MEANS A SEQUENCE OF  
8 DEGREE OR NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS EARNED THROUGH VARIOUS MEANS,  
9 INCLUDING THROUGH ASSESSMENT OF PRIOR LEARNING, THAT MAY BE  
10 ACCUMULATED OVER TIME AND MOVE AN INDIVIDUAL ALONG A CAREER  
11 PATHWAY OR UP A CAREER LADDER.

12 (j) "STATE INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION" OR "INSTITUTION"  
13 HAS THE SAME MEANING AS SET FORTH IN SECTION 23-1-135.

14 (2) (a) THE STATE OF COLORADO FORMALLY RECOGNIZES THE  
15 QUALITY NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED PURSUANT  
16 TO SECTION 23-5-145.6 (2) AS THE PRIMARY TOOL FOR EVALUATING AND  
17 ENSURING THE QUALITY OF NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS OFFERED WITHIN  
18 THE STATE.

19 (b) THE DEPARTMENT, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE COLORADO  
20 WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,  
21 THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT, AND THE COLORADO  
22 OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SHALL ENSURE THE EFFECTIVE  
23 INTEGRATION OF THE QUALITY NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS FRAMEWORK  
24 WITHIN THE STATE'S EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE SYSTEMS.

25 (c) AT LEAST ANNUALLY, THE DEPARTMENT, IN COLLABORATION  
26 WITH THE COLORADO WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE  
27 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND

1 EMPLOYMENT, AND THE COLORADO OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
2 SHALL EVALUATE NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS OFFERED THROUGH  
3 STATE-RECOGNIZED PROGRAMS TO ENSURE THE CREDENTIALS MEET THE  
4 QUALITY STANDARDS SET FORTH IN THE QUALITY NONDEGREE  
5 CREDENTIALS FRAMEWORK. STATE-RECOGNIZED PROGRAMS THAT ARE  
6 REQUIRED TO ENSURE NONDEGREE CREDENTIAL OFFERINGS MEET THE  
7 QUALITY STANDARDS SET FORTH IN THE QUALITY NONDEGREE  
8 CREDENTIALS FRAMEWORK INCLUDE, BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

9 (I) THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUCCESS PROGRAM CREATED  
10 PURSUANT TO SECTION 22-54-138; AND

11 (II) THE STACKABLE CREDENTIAL PATHWAYS IDENTIFIED  
12 PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-5-145.6 (3).

13 (d) AT LEAST ANNUALLY, THE DEPARTMENT, IN COLLABORATION  
14 WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND  
15 EMPLOYMENT, AND THE COLORADO OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,  
16 SHALL SUPPLY THE STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL WITH A  
17 LIST OF QUALITY NONDEGREE CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS THAT MEET THE  
18 QUALITY STANDARDS SET FORTH IN THE QUALITY NONDEGREE  
19 CREDENTIALS FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION IN THE COLORADO TALENT  
20 REPORT PRODUCED PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-46.3-103 (3)(a) AND IN A  
21 CREDENTIAL REGISTRY ENDORSED BY THE STATE.

22 (3) (a) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ENGAGE STATE AGENCIES,  
23 EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND  
24 OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO STUDY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS  
25 CONCERNING THE ADOPTION OF ISCED AS THE STATE'S STANDARD  
26 FRAMEWORK FOR CLASSIFYING NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS AND ISCED'S  
27 WIDER APPLICATION IN THE STATE'S EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE

1 SYSTEMS. ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2025, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL  
2 COMPLETE A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS TO INFORM A REPORT.

3 THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS MUST:

4 (I) SOLICIT INPUT FROM EMPLOYERS AND THEIR INDUSTRY OR  
5 TRADE ASSOCIATIONS;

6 (II) SOLICIT INPUT FROM STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER  
7 EDUCATION;

8 (III) SOLICIT INPUT FROM THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
9 AND EMPLOYMENT, INCLUDING THE OFFICE OF FUTURE OF WORK AND THE  
10 STATE APPRENTICESHIP AGENCY, THE STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
11 COUNCIL, AND THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STUDENT  
12 PATHWAYS UNIT; AND

13 (IV) LEVERAGE THE RESOURCES AND TOOLS OF THE ISCED  
14 COMMUNITY.

15 (b) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL STUDY AND MAKE  
16 RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HOW ISCED EQUIVALENCY LEVELS  
17 MAY BE:

18 (I) IMPLEMENTED AS THE STATE'S STANDARD FRAMEWORK FOR  
19 ORGANIZING AND CLASSIFYING NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS;

20 (II) ASSIGNED TO CREDENTIALS OR PACKAGES OF CREDENTIALS  
21 IDENTIFIED AND APPROVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-5-145.6(3) AND (4);

22 (III) ASSIGNED TO REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS;

23 (IV) WIDELY ADOPTED BY STAKEHOLDERS TO FACILITATE  
24 ALIGNMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS AND ASSOCIATED  
25 QUALIFICATIONS; AND

26 (V) EFFECTIVELY INTEGRATED WITHIN THE STATE'S EDUCATION  
27 AND WORKFORCE SYSTEMS.



1 (c) ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2025, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL  
2 REPORT ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EDUCATION  
3 COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, OR ANY  
4 SUCCESSOR COMMITTEES.

5 (d) ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2025, USING THE PROCESS  
6 RECOMMENDED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (3)(b) OF THIS SECTION, THE  
7 DEPARTMENT SHALL ASSIGN ISCED EQUIVALENCY LEVELS TO THE  
8 CREDENTIALS INCLUDED IN THE STACKABLE CREDENTIAL PATHWAYS  
9 IDENTIFIED AND APPROVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-5-145.6(3) AND (4).  
10 THE ISCED ALIGNMENT PROCESS MUST CONSIDER CREDENTIAL PROGRAM  
11 RIGOR AND RELEVANCE.

12 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** part 10 to article  
13 83 of title 8 as follows:

14 **PART 10**

15 **APPRENTICESHIP INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**

16 **8-83-1001. Definitions.** AS USED IN THIS PART 10, UNLESS THE  
17 CONTEXT OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

18 (1) "INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION"  
19 OR "ISCED" MEANS A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANIZING  
20 EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT APPLIES UNIFORM AND  
21 INTERNATIONALLY AGREED-UPON CLASSIFICATIONS TO FACILITATE  
22 COMPARISONS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS ACROSS  
23 COUNTRIES.

24 (2) "OFFICE" MEANS THE OFFICE OF FUTURE OF WORK CREATED IN  
25 SECTION 8-15.8-103.

26 **8-83-1002. Apprenticeship program alignment with**  
27 **international standards.** (1) BEGINNING MARCH 1, 2025, THE OFFICE, IN

1 COORDINATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE DEPARTMENT  
2 OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AND THE CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION  
3 DIVISION WITHIN THE COLORADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM, SHALL  
4 COLLABORATE WITH THE STATE APPRENTICESHIP AGENCY TO DETERMINE  
5 ISCED EQUIVALENCY LEVELS FOR EACH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM  
6 REGISTERED ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 2025. IN MAKING ISCED  
7 EQUIVALENCY LEVEL DETERMINATIONS, THE OFFICE SHALL:

8 (a) APPLY THE PROCESS RECOMMENDED PURSUANT TO SECTION  
9 23-5-145.8 (3)(b); AND

10 (b) REQUIRE POSTING OF THE DETERMINED ISCED LEVEL  
11 ALONGSIDE THE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM ON ALL ISSUED  
12 APPRENTICESHIP CERTIFICATES OF COMPLETION AND IN ALL PUBLIC  
13 LISTINGS, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE ELIGIBLE TRAINING  
14 PROVIDER LISTS DISSEMINATED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND  
15 EMPLOYMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 8-83-225 (1)(c) AND THE COLORADO  
16 STATE APPRENTICESHIP RESOURCE DIRECTORY CREATED PURSUANT TO  
17 SECTION 8-83-308.

18 (2) ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2026, THE OFFICE SHALL  
19 DETERMINE ISCED EQUIVALENCY LEVELS FOR EACH APPRENTICESHIP  
20 PROGRAM REGISTERED BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2025. AFTER MAKING ISCED  
21 EQUIVALENCY LEVEL DETERMINATIONS, THE OFFICE SHALL REQUIRE  
22 POSTING OF THE DETERMINED ISCED LEVEL ALONGSIDE THE  
23 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM ON ALL ISSUED APPRENTICESHIP CERTIFICATES  
24 OF COMPLETION AND IN ALL PUBLIC LISTINGS, INCLUDING, BUT NOT  
25 LIMITED TO, THE ELIGIBLE TRAINING PROVIDER LISTS DISSEMINATED BY  
26 THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION  
27 8-83-225 (1)(c) AND THE COLORADO STATE APPRENTICESHIP RESOURCE

1 DIRECTORY CREATED PURSUANT TO SECTION 8-83-308.

2 **SECTION 4.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 22-54-138, **amend**  
3 (3)(a) as follows:

4 **22-54-138. Career development success program - created -**  
5 **funding - report - legislative declaration - definitions - repeal.**

6 (3) (a) On or before August 15, 2016, and on or before July 1 each year  
7 thereafter, the work force development council, in collaboration with the  
8 department of higher education, the department of education, the  
9 department of labor and employment, the Colorado community college  
10 system, and the Colorado office of economic development, shall publish  
11 on the council's website a list of the qualified industry-credential  
12 programs and qualified workplace training programs THAT MEET THE  
13 QUALITY STANDARDS REQUIRED PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-5-145.8 (2)(c)  
14 for that school year. At least annually, the council and its partners shall  
15 identify and review the qualified industry-credential programs and  
16 qualified workplace training programs by identifying the jobs included in  
17 the Colorado talent report, prepared pursuant to section 24-46.3-103, with  
18 the greatest regional and state demand, including high-skill, high-wage  
19 jobs in in-demand industries, and, after consultation with relevant  
20 industries, identifying the programs that have labor market value and are  
21 likely to lead to the identified jobs. Any programs that the council  
22 determines do not demonstrate labor market value may be removed from  
23 the council's website.

24 **SECTION 5.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, 23-5-145.6, **add** (4.5)  
25 as follows:

26 **23-5-145.6. Opportunities for credential attainment - fund -**  
27 **report - definitions - repeal.** (4.5) THE STACKABLE CREDENTIAL

1 PATHWAYS MUST MEET THE QUALITY STANDARDS REQUIRED PURSUANT TO  
2 SECTION 23-5-145.8 (2)(c).

3 **SECTION 6. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act  
4 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the  
5 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except  
6 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V  
7 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this  
8 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take  
9 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in  
10 November 2024 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the  
11 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.