

Second Regular Session
Seventy-fourth General Assembly
STATE OF COLORADO

ENGROSSED

*This Version Includes All Amendments Adopted
on Second Reading in the House of Introduction*

LLS NO. 24-0628.02 Anna Petrini x5497

SENATE BILL 24-143

SENATE SPONSORSHIP

Coleman and Zenzinger,

HOUSE SPONSORSHIP

Herod and Hamrick,

Senate Committees

Education
Appropriations

House Committees

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, ALIGNING STACKABLE**
105 **CREDENTIAL PATHWAYS AND APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS WITH**
106 **INTERNATIONAL CLASSIFICATION STANDARDS, AND MAKING AN**
107 **APPROPRIATION.**

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>.)

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.

SENATE
Amended 2nd Reading
April 18, 2024

Current law requires the department of higher education (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.

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

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

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

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

1 (d) To address this need, Colorado requires a system that brings
2 quality assurance, clarity, and order to the complex landscape of both
3 nondegree and traditional degree credentials by validating high-quality
4 credentials and indicating the level of training or skill mastery they
5 deliver; and

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

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

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

20 **23-5-145.8. Credential quality standards - report - definitions.**

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

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

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

1 (c) "DEPARTMENT" MEANS THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER
2 EDUCATION CREATED AND EXISTING PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-1-114.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

27 (c) BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026, AND ANNUALLY THEREAFTER,

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

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

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

15 (d) BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026, AND ANNUALLY THEREAFTER,
16 THE DEPARTMENT, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF
17 EDUCATION, THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT, AND THE
18 COLORADO OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SHALL SUPPLY THE
19 STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL WITH A LIST OF QUALITY
20 NONDEGREE CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS THAT MEET THE QUALITY
21 STANDARDS SET FORTH IN THE QUALITY NONDEGREE CREDENTIALS
22 FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSION IN THE COLORADO TALENT REPORT
23 PRODUCED PURSUANT TO SECTION 24-46.3-103 (3)(a) AND IN A
24 CREDENTIAL REGISTRY ENDORSED BY THE STATE.

25 (3) (a) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ENGAGE STATE AGENCIES,
26 EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INDUSTRY
27 ASSOCIATIONS, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO STUDY AND MAKE

1 RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING THE ADOPTION OF ISCED AS THE
2 STATE'S STANDARD FRAMEWORK FOR CLASSIFYING NONDEGREE
3 CREDENTIALS AND ISCED'S WIDER APPLICATION IN THE STATE'S
4 EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE SYSTEMS. ON OR BEFORE JULY 31, 2025, THE
5 DEPARTMENT SHALL COMPLETE A STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS
6 TO INFORM A REPORT. THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PROCESS MUST:

7 (I) SOLICIT INPUT FROM EMPLOYERS AND THEIR INDUSTRY OR
8 TRADE ASSOCIATIONS;

9 (II) SOLICIT INPUT FROM STATE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER
10 EDUCATION;

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

16 (IV) LEVERAGE THE RESOURCES AND TOOLS OF THE ISCED
17 COMMUNITY.

18 (b) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL STUDY AND MAKE
19 RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING HOW ISCED EQUIVALENCY LEVELS
20 MAY BE:

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

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

25 (III) ASSIGNED TO REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIPS;

26 (IV) WIDELY ADOPTED BY STAKEHOLDERS TO FACILITATE
27 ALIGNMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS AND ASSOCIATED

1 QUALIFICATIONS; AND

2 (V) EFFECTIVELY INTEGRATED WITHIN THE STATE'S EDUCATION
3 AND WORKFORCE SYSTEMS.

4 (c) ON OR BEFORE JULY 31, 2025, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL REPORT
5 ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEES
6 OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, OR ANY SUCCESSOR
7 COMMITTEES.

8 (d) ON OR BEFORE JULY 31, 2025, USING THE PROCESS
9 RECOMMENDED PURSUANT TO SUBSECTION (3)(b) OF THIS SECTION, THE
10 DEPARTMENT SHALL ASSIGN ISCED EQUIVALENCY LEVELS TO THE
11 CREDENTIALS INCLUDED IN THE STACKABLE CREDENTIAL PATHWAYS
12 IDENTIFIED AND APPROVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-5-145.6(3) AND (4).
13 THE ISCED ALIGNMENT PROCESS MUST CONSIDER CREDENTIAL PROGRAM
14 RIGOR AND RELEVANCE.

15 (4) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL IMPLEMENT THIS SECTION SUBJECT TO
16 AVAILABLE APPROPRIATIONS.

17 **SECTION 3.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** part 10 to article
18 83 of title 8 as follows:

19 PART 10

20 APPRENTICESHIP INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

21 **8-83-1001. Definitions.** AS USED IN THIS PART 10, UNLESS THE
22 CONTEXT OTHERWISE REQUIRES:

23 (1) "INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION"
24 OR "ISCED" MEANS A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ORGANIZING
25 EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS THAT APPLIES UNIFORM AND
26 INTERNATIONALLY AGREED-UPON CLASSIFICATIONS TO FACILITATE
27 COMPARISONS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS ACROSS

1 COUNTRIES.

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

4 **8-83-1002. Apprenticeship program alignment with
5 international standards.** (1) BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026, AND

6 ANNUALLY THEREAFTER, THE OFFICE, IN COORDINATION WITH THE
7 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION,
8 THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT, AND THE CAREER AND
9 TECHNICAL EDUCATION DIVISION WITHIN THE COLORADO COMMUNITY
10 COLLEGE SYSTEM, SHALL COLLABORATE WITH THE STATE APPRENTICESHIP
11 AGENCY TO DETERMINE ISCED EQUIVALENCY LEVELS FOR EACH
12 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM REGISTERED ON OR AFTER JULY 31, 2025. IN
13 MAKING ISCED EQUIVALENCY LEVEL DETERMINATIONS, THE OFFICE
14 SHALL:

15 (a) APPLY THE PROCESS RECOMMENDED PURSUANT TO SECTION
16 23-5-145.8 (3)(b); AND

17 (b) REQUIRE POSTING OF THE DETERMINED ISCED LEVEL
18 ALONGSIDE THE APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM ON ALL ISSUED
19 APPRENTICESHIP CERTIFICATES OF COMPLETION AND IN ALL PUBLIC
20 LISTINGS, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE ELIGIBLE TRAINING
21 PROVIDER LISTS DISSEMINATED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND
22 EMPLOYMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 8-83-225 (1)(c) AND THE COLORADO
23 STATE APPRENTICESHIP RESOURCE DIRECTORY CREATED PURSUANT TO
24 SECTION 8-83-308.

25 (2) ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 1, 2027, THE OFFICE SHALL
26 DETERMINE ISCED EQUIVALENCY LEVELS FOR EACH APPRENTICESHIP
27 PROGRAM REGISTERED BEFORE JULY 31, 2025. AFTER MAKING ISCED

1 EQUIVALENCY LEVEL DETERMINATIONS, THE OFFICE SHALL REQUIRE
2 POSTING OF THE DETERMINED ISCED LEVEL ALONGSIDE THE
3 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM ON ALL ISSUED APPRENTICESHIP CERTIFICATES
4 OF COMPLETION AND IN ALL PUBLIC LISTINGS, INCLUDING, BUT NOT
5 LIMITED TO, THE ELIGIBLE TRAINING PROVIDER LISTS DISSEMINATED BY
6 THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION
7 8-83-225 (1)(c) AND THE COLORADO STATE APPRENTICESHIP RESOURCE
8 DIRECTORY CREATED PURSUANT TO SECTION 8-83-308.

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

11 **22-54-138. Career development success program - created -**
12 **funding - report - legislative declaration - definitions - repeal.**

13 (3) (a) On or before August 15, 2016, and on or before July 1 each year
14 thereafter, the work force development council, in collaboration with the
15 department of higher education, the department of education, the
16 department of labor and employment, the Colorado community college
17 system, and the Colorado office of economic development, shall publish
18 on the council's website a list of the qualified industry-credential
19 programs and qualified workplace training programs THAT MEET THE
20 QUALITY STANDARDS REQUIRED PURSUANT TO SECTION 23-5-145.8 (2)(c)
21 for that school year. At least annually, the council and its partners shall
22 identify and review the qualified industry-credential programs and
23 qualified workplace training programs by identifying the jobs included in
24 the Colorado talent report, prepared pursuant to section 24-46.3-103, with
25 the greatest regional and state demand, including high-skill, high-wage
26 jobs in in-demand industries, and, after consultation with relevant
27 industries, identifying the programs that have labor market value and are

1 likely to lead to the identified jobs. Any programs that the council
2 determines do not demonstrate labor market value may be removed from
3 the council's website.

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

6 **23-5-145.6. Opportunities for credential attainment - fund -**
7 **report - definitions - repeal.** (4.5) THE STACKABLE CREDENTIAL
8 PATHWAYS MUST MEET THE QUALITY STANDARDS REQUIRED PURSUANT TO
9 SECTION 23-5-145.8 (2)(c).

10 **SECTION 6. Appropriation.** (1) For the 2024-25 state fiscal
11 year, \$124,287 is appropriated to the department of higher education for
12 use by the Colorado commission on higher education and higher
13 education special purpose programs. This appropriation is from the
14 general fund and is based on an assumption that the commission will
15 require an additional 1.2 FTE. To implement this act, the office may use
16 this appropriation for S.B. 22-192 development and implementation of
17 stackable credentials.

18 (2) For the 2024-25 state fiscal year, \$30,000 is appropriated to
19 the department of labor and employment for use by the office of future of
20 work. This appropriation is from the general fund. To implement this act,
21 the office may use this appropriation for program costs.

22 **SECTION 7. Act subject to petition - effective date.** This act
23 takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on the day following the expiration of the
24 ninety-day period after final adjournment of the general assembly; except
25 that, if a referendum petition is filed pursuant to section 1 (3) of article V
26 of the state constitution against this act or an item, section, or part of this
27 act within such period, then the act, item, section, or part will not take

1 effect unless approved by the people at the general election to be held in
2 November 2024 and, in such case, will take effect on the date of the
3 official declaration of the vote thereon by the governor.