

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 2405 Session of
2014

INTRODUCED BY MURT, HARPER, D. MILLER, GAINEY, CLAY, MILLARD,
SWANGER, SCHLOSSBERG, V. BROWN, MIRABITO, HARHAI, MAHONEY,
THOMAS, CALTAGIRONE, SNYDER, COHEN, LUCAS, BROWNLEE, SABATINA
AND ROEBUCK, JULY 1, 2014

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND INDUSTRY, JULY 1, 2014

AN ACT

1 Providing for the Turning High School Graduates with
2 Disabilities into Taxpayers Act; imposing duties on the
3 Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; and providing for
4 appropriations.

5 WHEREAS, Too often, students with disabilities graduate from
6 high school "to the couch" in their parents' home with little
7 hope of entering the job market or are placed in segregated
8 settings with other people with disabilities where the taxpayer
9 investment in their education is not fully realized; and

10 WHEREAS, The unemployment rate for people with disabilities
11 is estimated to be 14%, which is far in excess of the
12 unemployment within the general population; and

13 WHEREAS, The work force participation rate for people with
14 disabilities is 20% as compared to 63% for individuals without
15 disabilities; and

16 WHEREAS, Many students with disabilities graduating from high
17 school are able to work at competitive employment in integrated
18 settings; and

1 WHEREAS, These students with disabilities can successfully
2 enter the private sector job market upon graduation and become
3 taxpaying citizens if they receive job readiness skill training
4 and supported work experience while in high school; and

5 WHEREAS, The General Assembly states that it shall be the
6 policy of the Commonwealth that competitive employment in
7 integrated settings shall be the primary goal for working-age
8 persons with disabilities.

9 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
10 hereby enacts as follows:

11 Section 1. Short title.

12 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Turning High
13 School Graduates with Disabilities into Taxpayers Act.

14 Section 2. Definitions.

15 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
16 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
17 context clearly indicates otherwise:

18 "Competitive employment." Work in the competitive labor
19 market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an
20 integrated setting for which an individual is compensated at or
21 above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and
22 level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar
23 work performed by individuals who do not have disabilities.

24 "Integrated setting." With respect to an employment outcome,
25 a setting typically found in the community in which an applicant
26 or eligible individual interacts with individuals without
27 disabilities, other than an individual who is providing services
28 to the applicants or eligible individuals to the same extent
29 that individuals without a disability in a comparable position
30 interact with other persons.

1 "Office of Vocational Rehabilitation." The Office of
2 Vocational Rehabilitation established under section 7 of the act
3 of December 20, 1988 (P.L.1306, No.167), known as the Vocational
4 Rehabilitation Act.

5 Section 3. Powers and duties of the Office of Vocational
6 Rehabilitation.

7 The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation shall be the lead
8 agency responsible for developing connections between local
9 education agencies and private employers necessary to the
10 successful transition at graduation of high school students with
11 disabilities to competitive employment. In collaboration with
12 officials of local education agencies and other public agencies,
13 such as an agency taking part in a county mental health and
14 intellectual disabilities program, the Office of Vocational
15 Rehabilitation shall:

16 (1) Participate in the development of individual
17 education plans for high school students with disabilities,
18 ensuring that job readiness skill training is included in
19 such plans where appropriate. Participation shall also
20 include attending individual education plan meetings when
21 local education agencies provide reasonable advance notice of
22 the meetings.

23 (2) Arrange for, monitor and support the placement of
24 high school students with disabilities in lawful internships,
25 on-the-job training and full-time or part-time work at
26 competitive wages in integrated settings with private sector
27 employers.

28 (3) Provide professional guidance relative to job
29 coaching services and provide the services to individuals who
30 are eligible for services at the the Office of Vocational

1 Rehabilitation and when the services are included in an
2 individualized plan for employment by the Office of
3 Vocational Rehabilitation so high school students with
4 disabilities are able to succeed in competitive employment
5 with private sector employers.

6 Section 4. Appropriations.

7 For fiscal year 2014-2015, sufficient State funds may be
8 appropriated to ensure that the Federal funds available to the
9 Commonwealth through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
10 under the provisions of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public
11 Law 93-112, 29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.) are matched by the Federal
12 Government. In subsequent fiscal years, sufficient State funds
13 may be appropriated to ensure that the funds available to the
14 Commonwealth under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are matched by
15 the Federal Government. The difference between the funding for
16 fiscal year 2014-2015 and the amounts appropriated during fiscal
17 year 2013-2014 to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and
18 the Federal funds matched by the State funds shall be earmarked
19 and utilized by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
20 exclusively to carry out the purposes of this act. This section
21 shall not apply to a future one-time increase in the State
22 appropriation and the matching Federal funds.

23 Section 20. Effective date.

24 This act shall take effect in 60 days.