

AB 296: Apprenticeship Fairs

Assemblymember Laurie Davies

IN BRIEF

AB 296 would require schools and school districts to host, at minimum, one standalone apprenticeship fair a year and additionally allow students who attend a career, college or apprenticeship fair community service credit that can be used towards graduation hour requirements.

THE ISSUE

California is at a crossroads. We have thousands of jobs that need to be filled by an educated and trained workforce, yet not enough workers to fill these roles. Our current education system has promoted a “High School-to-Harvard” mentality. This is unfortunate. We need to change the status quo and promote a “High School-to-Hard Hat” mentality.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in September of 2023, California had 911,000 job openings. That means these are good-paying jobs that are going unfilled because employers cannot find enough applicants or people with the qualified experience to apply. Take for example, a Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) apprentice. These are people who drive and transport our goods up and down California’s highways. According to [ZipRecruiter](#), on average, these apprentices earn roughly \$72,635 a year. And that is just at the very beginning of a career. Not enough young students know that being employed in that type of field could lead to a lucrative and stable career.

As of [February 2024](#), the state of California has 91,420 apprentices and this figure leads the nation. However, when we look at programs available to young people interested in finding a program, California [falls behind](#) states like Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. If we are to increase the number of programs offered, we must increase the demand of people wanting to join an apprenticeship. This starts with educating them that these jobs and opportunities exist right in their own communities.

Many schools in California partner with local labor unions and apprenticeship programs to outreach to students at local college or career fairs. However, more can be done to give apprenticeship opportunities their own event for students and their families to hear

directly from recruiters about why a path involving a pre-apprentice or apprenticeship is right for them.

CURRENT LAW

[California Labor Code 3074.2](#) requires schools that host college and career fairs must outreach to local apprenticeship programs and invite them to attend the event. Furthermore, it only encourages schools to host standalone apprenticeship fairs. It does not require them to do so.

THE SOLUTION

AB 296 would require that a school or school district host an apprenticeship fair, in the style of a college or career fair, at least once per school year. In addition, the bill would authorize a school district that requires as a condition of graduation students complete community service hours the ability for students to earn one hour of credit for attending a career, college or apprenticeship fair.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Staff: Taylor Melody

(916) 319-2074

Email address: Taylor.Melody@asm.ca.gov