



SENATE BILL 124: State Hiring Accessibility and Modernization.

2025-2026 General Assembly

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| Committee: | House Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House | Date: | June 17, 2025 |
| Introduced by: | Sens. Corbin, Lee, Johnson | Prepared by: | Brad Krehely |
| Analysis of: | Second Edition | | Staff Attorney |

OVERVIEW: *Senate Bill 124 would do all of the following:*

- *Direct the State Human Resources Commission (Commission) to examine the educational, experiential, and training requirements for jobs and determine when practical experience and training may be the appropriate qualification for a position.*
- *Require the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) to streamline the job application process for State positions by allowing applicants to upload resumes or website profiles.*
- *Provide that State departments, agencies, and institutions should simplify their job postings to make it easy for applicants to read the postings and understand essential qualifications and management preferences.*
- *Require the Commission to adopt rules or policies to require the posting of a closing date for each job opening unless the employing agency, department, office, board, commission, system, or institution has approved an exception for critical classifications.*
- *Grant employing agencies flexibility in hiring, pay, and classification.*
- *Permit the Council of State, executive branch agencies, the Community College System Office, and The University of North Carolina to directly hire temporary employees into vacant positions if certain conditions are met.*
- *Allow the Council of State, executive branch agencies, the Community College System Office, and The University of North Carolina to directly hire, without posting, into a vacant position if certain conditions are met.*
- *Require the Commission to adopt a new performance management and performance evaluation policy.*
- *Allow local entities to give an employment preference to eligible members of the National Guard for positions subject to the State Human Resources Act.*
- *Allow local entities to offer sign-on and retention bonuses to employees subject to the State Human Resources Act.*
- *Amend "rule" in G.S. 150B-2(8a)(i) to modify an exclusion from the definition.*
- *Require the OSHR to report on recommended changes to modernize the North Carolina Human Resources Act and require the Commission to amend rules consistent with the act.*

CURRENT LAW: Chapter 126 of the General Statutes establishes for State government a system of personnel administration with the Commission being the policy and rulemaking body. The Commission

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must establish policies and rules for positions that are subject to the State Human Resources Act including those related to (i) position classification plans; (ii) compensation plans; and (iii) reasonable qualifications as to the education, experience, specialized training, licenses, certifications, and other job-related requirements pertinent to the work to be performed for each class of positions.

BILL ANALYSIS:

Section 1 would require the Commission to do all of the following:

- Regularly assess the educational, experiential, and training requirements for positions in State government.
- Determine when practical experience and training (e.g. military service, apprenticeship, or trade school) is the appropriate job qualification, rather than a four-year college degree.
- Identify jobs for which educational, experiential, and training requirements can be reduced from their present level.
- To the extent practicable, remove language requiring a four-year college degree in position descriptions when a four-year degree is not necessary for the position.

Beginning October 1, 2025, the Commission would have to report annually to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on General Government on these efforts.

Section 2.(a) would require the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) to streamline the job application process for State positions by allowing applicants to upload resumes or website profiles. An electronic tool would be used to import information from these documents into the State job application format. The applicant would still be responsible for ensuring that the information appears correctly in the application. State agencies would also be allowed to collect certain information not needed for initial screening later in the selection process. Beginning in 2026 and annually after that, the OSHR must present the State application form and share the import process with the Commission.

Section 2.(b), (c), and (d) would provide that G.S. 126-14.3A, G.S. 126-3.1, and G.S. 126-14.3B, which are enacted by this act, would apply to exempt managerial positions, a warden of an adult corrections facility, and a warden of a State adult corrections facility.

Section 2.(e) would require the OSHR to modify the State job application process as required by this section no later than November 1, 2025.

Section 2.(f) would make this section effective when it becomes law.

Section 3.(a) would provide that State departments, agencies, and institutions should simplify their job postings to make it easy for applicants to read the postings and understand essential qualifications and management preferences. "Essential qualifications" would be defined as "the minimum education and experience set forth in the class specification of the vacancy being filled." Any additional qualifications, knowledge, skills, and abilities listed in the vacancy announcement would be management preferences. This section would require approval of the agency head or a designee for any vacancy announcement that adds more than five knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Section 3.(b) would make this section effective when it becomes law and would make it apply to all positions posted or reposted on or after that date.

Section 4.(a) would require the Commission to adopt rules or policies to require the posting of a closing date for each job opening unless the employing agency, department, office, board, commission, system, or institution has approved an exception for critical classifications (currently, a posting must have a closing

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date unless an exception for critical classification has been approved by the Commission or a special exemption is made through the OSHR).

Section 4.(b) would provide that exceptions for critical classifications remain in effect if previously granted by the Commission or the OSHR unless the employing agency, department, office, board, commission, system, or institution determines otherwise.

Section 5.(a) would give employing agencies (Council of State, State agencies in the executive branch, the Community College System Office, and University of North Carolina) flexibility to do all of the following:

- Allow qualified applicants to have their applications considered for future positions at the same agency and at other agencies within the same or comparable classification.
- Permit agencies to hire applicants from postings that apply to all vacancies in a particular classification across all State agencies.
- Classify or reclassify positions according to the Commission's classification system if employees meet minimum requirements for the classification.
- Establish employee salaries within Commission determined salary ranges for position classifications.

Section 5.(b) would make this section effective July 1, 2025.

Section 6.(a) would permit the Council of State, executive branch agencies, the Community College System Office, and The University of North Carolina to directly hire temporary employees into vacant positions if all of the following conditions are met:

- The permanent position to be filled is vacant.
- The temporary employee must have worked for a minimum of six months (excluding mandatory breaks) in a substantially equivalent role with satisfactory performance.
- The temporary employee must meet the minimum education and experience requirements for the position classification, and the salary must be within the approved classification range. The Director of the Office of State Human Resources may waive these requirements.
- The temporary employee must have been originally hired through the Temporary Solutions Program or directly hired by a State agency as a temporary State employee.

A hiring under this section would be exempt from portions of Chapter 126, including publicly posting the position, requiring an application, doing interviews, and selecting from the pool of the most qualified applicants. However, a hiring would not be exempt from equal employment provisions, provisions involving the privacy of personnel records, and certain provisions related to political activities of employees in Chapter 126.

Section 6.(b) would make this section effective when it becomes law.

Section 7 would allow the Council of State, executive branch agencies, the Community College System Office, and The University of North Carolina to directly hire, without posting, into a vacant position if all of the following are met:

- That employer previously posted for recruitment a position that has the same or comparable classification as the now vacant position.
- The person hired applied for that previous vacancy.

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- The employer selected the person to be within the pool of the most qualified persons for the previous vacancy, but did not hire that person.
- For the position that is now vacant, the person who is being hired meets the minimum education and experience requirements for the classification and has a salary within the vacant position's classification range.

A hiring would be exempt from portions of Chapter 126, including publicly posting the position, requiring a new application, holding a new interview or new reference checks, and following the priorities for certain types of applicants under State law. However, a hiring would not be exempt from equal employment provisions, provisions involving the privacy of personnel records, and certain provisions related to political activities of employees in Chapter 126.

Section 8.(a) would require the OSHR to share an improved process for performance management to the Commission and the Governor. Subject to the Governor's approval, the Commission would have to adopt a new performance management and performance evaluation policy by March 15, 2026.

Section 8.(b) would provide that the Commission's existing rules on performance management and performance evaluation would be repealed when the act becomes law.

Section 9 would allow local entities to give an employment preference to eligible members of the National Guard for positions subject to the State Human Resources Act.

Section 10 would allow local entities to offer sign-on and retention bonuses to employees subject to the State Human Resources Act. Those bonuses would have to be consistent with the Sign-On and Retention Bonus policy for State agency employees.

Section 11 would amend the definition of "rule" in G.S. 150B-2(8a)(i). Under current law, the definition does not include "[j]ob classification standards, job qualifications, and salaries established for positions under the jurisdiction of the State Human Resources Commission." This section would provide that the exclusion would apply to policies established for State and local government positions under the Commission so as long as the standards, qualifications, salaries, and policies directly affect only applicants for employment, current employees, or resolving matters related to past employment.

Section 12 would require the OSHR to report to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Fiscal Research Division on recommended changes to modernize the North Carolina Human Resources Act, simplify its provisions, and align it with best practices. The report must be submitted by March 15, 2026, and the OSHR would have to collaborate with stakeholders to develop the proposals.

Section 13 would require the Commission to repeal or amend its rules to make changes consistent with this act.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Except as otherwise provided, the act would be effective when it becomes law.

Michael Whitfield, Staff Attorney for the Legislative Analysis Division, contributed to this summary.