



**House Education Policy Reported Substitute for
HB266**

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A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to public education; to create the Restoring Educational Advancement of Completing High School (REACH) Act; to establish a nontraditional high school diploma option, through the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community College System, as an additional pathway through which a student may earn a high school diploma; to provide for the duties of the Alabama Community College System, the State Superintendent of Education, and the State Department of Education; to require the Alabama Community College System to annually summarize and report on the effectiveness of the program to the Legislature; to amend Section 16-28-3.1, Code of Alabama 1975, to provide further for the information provided to a student and his or her parents or legal guardian during the exit interview from high school and to require the sharing of data between the State Department of Education and the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community College System regarding students who have withdrawn from high school; and to amend Section 16-28-40, Code of Alabama 1975, to include proof of participating in a nontraditional high school



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29 diploma option program as a reason to allow an individual
30 under the age of 19 to receive a driver's or learner's
31 license.

32 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

33 Section 1. (a) This section shall be known and may be
34 cited as the Restoring Educational Advancement of Completing
35 High School (REACH) Act.

36 (b) For the purposes of this section, the following
37 terms have the following meanings:

38 (1) ACCS. The Alabama Community College System.

39 (2) ADULT EDUCATION. Education programs provided
40 through the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community
41 College System and its approved network of providers.

42 (3) DEPARTMENT. The State Department of Education.

43 (4) LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY. A county school system or
44 city school system operating public primary and secondary
45 schools.

46 (5) NONTRADITIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OPTION. An
47 alternative pathway for earning a high school diploma
48 developed through adult education.

49 (c) (1) The ACCS, in collaboration with the State
50 Superintendent of Education, shall establish a nontraditional
51 high school diploma option for students who are 18 years of
52 age or older and who have withdrawn from high school before
53 graduating pursuant to Section 16-28-3.1, Code of Alabama
54 1975, as a means for those students to earn a high school
55 diploma.

56 (2) The ACCS shall develop, implement, and continually



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57 evaluate the effectiveness of the nontraditional high school
58 diploma option program to ensure that the curricula of the
59 program is aligned with public high school diploma
60 requirements. The ACCS shall also oversee the management and
61 control of each nontraditional high school diploma option
62 program offered.

63 (d) (1) The ACCS, through its network of community and
64 technical colleges, shall work with local education agencies
65 throughout the state to implement the nontraditional high
66 school diploma option at the local level. Local education
67 agencies shall actively promote the availability of the
68 nontraditional high school diploma option to at-risk juniors
69 and seniors. Additionally, the Adult Education Division of the
70 ACCS, in conjunction with the department, shall oversee a
71 statewide awareness campaign to ensure that students, parents,
72 and educators throughout the state are informed about the
73 opportunities and supports available through this program.

74 (2) Adult education providers approved by the ACCS and
75 public high schools may enter into agreements regarding
76 student participation in nontraditional high school diploma
77 options that include, but are not limited to, the following:

78 a. Location and manner of instructional delivery
79 including, but not limited to, in-person, virtual, or a
80 hybrid.

81 b. Reasonable accommodations for participants.

82 c. Appropriate support services for participants.

83 (e) The ACCS, in collaboration with the department and
84 local education agencies, shall track program participation,



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85 student retention, and high school diplomas awarded through
86 the nontraditional high school diploma option to measure the
87 effectiveness of the program. Commencing on January 1, 2026,
88 and each January 1 thereafter, the Chancellor of the ACCS
89 shall submit a summary of the information tracked to the
90 Chairs of the House and Senate Education Policy Committees.

91 (f) Students who earn a high school diploma through the
92 nontraditional high school diploma option are eligible for
93 admission to any two-year or four-year institution of higher
94 education in the state; provided, however, each institution
95 shall maintain the ability to set its own admission
96 requirements.

97 (g) The Board of Trustees of the ACCS and the State
98 Board of Education may adopt reasonable rules to implement
99 this section including, but not limited to, the following:

100 (1) Allowing an increase to the credit ratio for
101 completion of postsecondary level instructional curricula
102 related to career readiness, career pathways, and integrated
103 education and training correlated to industry recognized
104 credentials.

105 (2) Utilization of the Workforce Innovation and
106 Opportunity Act; the Title II Adult Education and Family
107 Literacy Act; and Measurable Skill Gain indicators as
108 referenced by the United States Department of Education Office
109 of Community, Technical, and Adult Education to accelerate the
110 achievement of a high school diploma.

111 (3) Agreed upon state strategies to reduce the dropout
112 rate by using the Adult Education Division of the Alabama



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113 Community College System network of providers as the primary
114 option of choice for students who have withdrawn from high
115 school to complete a high school diploma or its recognized
116 equivalent.

117 Section 2. Sections 16-28-3.1 and 16-28-40 of the Code
118 of Alabama 1975, are amended to read as follows:

119 "§16-28-3.1

120 (a) (1) A child ~~over the age of~~ who is 17 years of age
121 or older may withdraw from public school prior to graduation
122 if both of the following circumstances exist:

123 ~~(1)~~ a. Written consent is granted by the child's parent
124 or legal guardian.

125 ~~(2)~~ b. An exit interview is conducted where the student
126 and the student's parent or legal guardian have been advised
127 that withdrawal from school shall likely reduce the student's
128 future earning potential and increase the student's likelihood
129 of being unemployed in the future. During the exit interview,
130 the student who is withdrawing from school shall be given
131 information that has been prepared and supplied by the State
132 Department of Education regarding the detrimental impacts and
133 effects of early withdrawal from school along with any
134 available training and employment opportunity programs,
135 provided such information is available.

136 (2) Information provided during an exit interview by a
137 local high school shall include materials describing available
138 adult education programs and services offered by eligible
139 adult education providers. The materials shall include, but
140 not limited to, General Education Diploma (GED) preparation



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141 services, the nontraditional high school diploma option
142 program, and other programs and pathways available for earning
143 industry certifications and credentials. The materials shall
144 be developed by the Adult Education Division of the Alabama
145 Community College System and approved by the State Department
146 of Education. The local high school shall also provide a
147 withdrawing student with a copy of his or her academic
148 records, including his or her current transcript, contact
149 information for available counseling services, and any
150 requested referrals to available adult education programs.

151 (b) The State Department of Education shall work with
152 local public school systems that have the lowest four-year
153 graduation rates. The ~~department~~ State Department of Education
154 shall incorporate specific dropout prevention strategies,
155 target resources, and gather data that will improve graduation
156 rates and educational outcomes in all grades in all public
157 schools. The ~~department~~ State Department of Education shall
158 develop specific methods of targeted intervention or identify
159 appropriate existing methods for local public school systems
160 that have a four-year graduation rate less than the percentage
161 as determined by the State Board of Education. These
162 interventions may include the following:

163 (1) Early intervention for students who fail Algebra I,
164 or any ninth grade reading or math class, and have
165 insufficient credits to be promoted.

166 (2) Alternative education programs designed to reengage
167 dropouts including, but not limited to, dual enrollment
168 courses at the community college level and participation in



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169 [the nontraditional high school diploma option.](#)

170 (3) Increased availability of advanced placement
171 courses.

172 (4) Offering full course fee waivers for students who
173 are eligible for free or reduced lunches, when enrolled in
174 dual credit courses.

175 (5) Flexible programs for older students who are
176 currently not enrolled.

177 (6) Comprehensive coaching for middle school and high
178 school students who are below grade level in reading and math
179 or who are at risk due to poor attendance, behavior, or safety
180 issues including, but not limited to, harassment and bullying.

181 (7) Teacher advisories and other supports that are
182 designed to specifically address the needs of those students
183 who are most at risk of dropping out of school by providing
184 opportunities to build positive connections with peers and
185 teachers and providing assistance with course selection,
186 school performance, and completion of graduation requirements.
187 Students who are most at risk of dropping out of school
188 include, but are not limited to, those students who move
189 often, have poor attendance, or have multiple suspensions or
190 discipline issues.

191 (8) Strategies that are specifically designed to
192 improve high school graduation rates for those teenagers who
193 are at the highest risk of dropping out, including, but not
194 limited to, students in the foster care system, pregnant
195 students, student parents, English as second language
196 students, and students with special educational needs.



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197 (c) The ~~department~~ State Department of Education, in
198 addition to other information and data, shall compile all of
199 the following data to ensure that the dropout prevention
200 program, and local versions of the program, are based upon
201 evidence-based research, are data-driven, and show continuous
202 improvement in all of the following:

203 (1) The total number of high school suspensions related
204 to truancy.

205 (2) The total number of students enrolled in
206 alternative education programs, including the nontraditional
207 high school diploma option.

208 (3) The total number of students who have been
209 reenrolled in programs with flexible schedules or community
210 college programs.

211 (4) The total number of students who have failed
212 Algebra I or ninth grade reading or math.

213 (5) The total number of students who are repeating the
214 ninth grade.

215 (6) The total number of students receiving remedial
216 assistance in the ninth grade.

217 (d) The ~~department~~ State Department of Education shall
218 prepare and submit to the Legislature a written report that
219 documents all of the following:

220 (1) The outcomes of the dropout prevention strategies
221 to date, at the local school system level.

222 (2) Any planned modification of school system dropout
223 prevention strategies and activities, based on the data
224 compiled.



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225 (e) Each local education agency shall report to the
226 State Department of Education, on a quarterly or more frequent
227 basis, student withdrawal data. This data shall include
228 specific information regarding the names and number of
229 students who have withdrawn from each school district. The
230 State Department of Education shall enter into a data sharing
231 agreement with the Adult Education Division of the Alabama
232 Community College System so this data may be accessed as
233 needed."

234 "§16-28-40

235 (a) The Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency shall deny
236 a driver's license or a learner's license for the operation of
237 a motor vehicle to any individual under the age of 19 who does
238 not, at the time of application, present a diploma or other
239 certificate of graduation issued to the individual from a
240 secondary high school of this state or any other state, or
241 documentation that the individual satisfies one of the
242 following:

243 (1) The individual is enrolled and making satisfactory
244 progress in a nontraditional high school diploma option
245 program or a course leading to a general educational
246 development certificate (GED) from a state approved
247 institution or organization, or has obtained the certificate.

248 (2) The individual is enrolled in a secondary school of
249 this state or any other state and has not at the time of
250 application accumulated disciplinary points while a student in
251 school that would extend the age of eligibility for the
252 student to apply for a driver's license.



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253 (3) The individual is participating in a job training
254 program approved by the State Superintendent of Education.

255 (4) The individual is gainfully and substantially
256 employed.

257 (5) The individual is a parent with the care and
258 custody of a minor or unborn child.

259 (6) A physician certifies that the parents of the
260 individual depend on him or her as their sole source of
261 transportation.

262 (7) The individual is exempted from this requirement
263 due to circumstances beyond his or her control as provided in
264 this chapter.

265 (b) (1) The attendance officer or chief attendance
266 administrator, upon request, shall provide documentation of
267 enrollment status and disciplinary points on a form approved
268 by the State Department of Education to any student 15 years
269 of age or older who is properly enrolled in a school under the
270 jurisdiction of the official, for presentation to the Alabama
271 State Law Enforcement Agency, on application for, or renewal
272 or reinstatement of, a driver's license or a learner's license
273 to operate a motor vehicle.

274 (2) Upon the request of a student seeking a fee
275 exemption on the basis of his or her homelessness, the staff
276 member designated to act as the local educational agency
277 liaison for homeless children and youth, pursuant to 42 U.S.C.
278 § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii), shall provide documentation that the
279 student is a qualified student, on a form approved by the
280 State Department of Education, for presentation to the Alabama



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281 State Law Enforcement Agency, on application for, or renewal,
282 reinstatement, or replacement of a driver's license. The term
283 "qualified student" refers to a student who the local
284 educational agency liaison for homeless children and youth
285 verifies as meeting the definition of a "homeless child or
286 youth" as provided by 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2) and whose
287 enrollment status and disciplinary points have been documented
288 pursuant to subdivision (1).

289 (3) Whenever a student 16 years of age or older
290 withdraws from school, the attendance officer or chief
291 attendance administrator shall notify the Alabama State Law
292 Enforcement Agency of the withdrawal. Withdrawal shall be
293 defined as more than 10 consecutive or 15 days total unexcused
294 absences during a single semester.

295 (c) Within five days of receipt of a notice of
296 withdrawal, the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency shall
297 send notice to the licensee that his or her driver's license
298 or learner's license will be suspended under this article on
299 the 30th day following the date the notice was sent unless
300 documentation of compliance with this article is received by
301 the agency before the 30th day.

302 (d) Whenever the withdrawal from school of the student,
303 or the failure of the student to enroll in a course leading to
304 or to obtain a GED or high school diploma, is beyond the
305 control of the student, or is for the purpose of transfer to
306 another school as confirmed in writing by the parent or
307 guardian of the student, or is for the purpose of
308 participating in a job training program approved by the State



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309 Superintendent of Education, no notice shall be sent by the
310 proper school official to the Alabama State Law Enforcement
311 Agency to suspend the license of the student. If the student
312 is applying for or renewing a driver's license or a learner's
313 license, the attendance officer or chief attendance
314 administrator, upon request, shall provide the student with
315 documentation to present to the Alabama State Law Enforcement
316 Agency to exempt the student from this section. The local
317 superintendent of education with the assistance of the county
318 or city school attendance director as the case may be, and any
319 other staff or school personnel, or the appropriate school
320 official of any private secondary school, shall be the sole
321 judge of whether the withdrawal is due to circumstances beyond
322 the control of the individual. Suspension or expulsion from
323 school or imprisonment in a jail or penitentiary is not a
324 circumstance beyond the control of ~~a~~ an individual.

325 (e) (1) Any individual over the age of 14 who is
326 convicted of the crime of possession of a pistol on the
327 premises of a public school, or a public school bus, or both,
328 under Section 13A-11-72 shall be denied issuance of a driver's
329 permit or license for the operation of a motor vehicle for 180
330 days from the date the individual is eligible and applies for
331 a permit or license for the operation of a motor vehicle. Any
332 adjudication as a juvenile delinquent or youthful offender
333 where the underlying charge is the possession of a pistol on
334 the premises of a public school, or a public school bus, or
335 both, under Section 13A-11-72 shall be considered a conviction
336 under this subsection, and the adjudication of an individual



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337 as a juvenile delinquent or youthful offender where the
338 underlying charge is a violation under Section 13A-11-72 shall
339 be reported to the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency.

340 (2) If an individual over the age of 14 years possesses
341 a driver's license on the date of conviction, the Alabama
342 State Law Enforcement Agency, within five days of receipt of a
343 notice of conviction from the court, shall send notice to the
344 licensee that his or her driver's license will be suspended.
345 The notice shall state that the license will be suspended for
346 180 days commencing on the 30th day following the date the
347 notice was sent unless documentation is received by the agency
348 before the 30th day that the individual was not convicted of
349 the crime. Upon the appropriate date, the agency shall suspend
350 the license.

351 (3) Upon the written request of the individual whose
352 license is denied or suspended, the Alabama State Law
353 Enforcement Agency shall afford the individual an opportunity
354 for a hearing in the same manner and under the procedure used
355 for other driver license suspensions. If the suspension or
356 denial of issuance determination is sustained by the Secretary
357 of the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency or the authorized
358 agent of the secretary, upon such hearing, the individual may
359 file a petition in the appropriate court to review the final
360 order of suspension or denial by the secretary or the
361 authorized agent of the secretary in the same manner and under
362 the same conditions as is provided in the case of suspensions
363 and denials.

364 (4) If the conviction is reversed within the 180-day



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365 period, the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency, upon receipt
366 of notice of the reversal from the Administrative Office of
367 Courts, shall reinstate a suspended license and shall accept
368 an application for a license and shall issue the license
369 according to law and regulation.

370 (5) The court shall notify the Alabama State Law
371 Enforcement Agency of the conviction of an individual over the
372 age of 14 of a crime involving the possession of a pistol on
373 the premises of a public school, or a public school bus, or
374 both, under Section 13A-11-72 and any reversal of the
375 conviction. The Administrative Office of Courts may ~~promulgate~~
376 adopt necessary rules ~~and regulations~~ to implement this
377 notification procedure."

378 Section 3. This act shall become effective on June 1,
379 2025.