

**HB266 ENGROSSED**



1 HB266

2 5VLQH66-2

3 By Representatives Woods, Bolton, Stadthagen, Colvin, Almond,

4 Hulsey, Shaw, Lipscomb, Rehm, Hammett, Underwood, Brinyark,

5 Robertson, Faulkner, Kirkland, Pettus, Drummond, Stubbs,

6 Daniels, Sellers, Wadsworth, Brown, Standridge, Estes,

7 Starnes, Shirey, Lamb, Mooney, Rigsby, DuBose, Lomax

8 RFD: Education Policy

9 First Read: 12-Feb-25



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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of Education and the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community College System regarding students who have withdrawn from high school; and to amend Section 16-28-40, Code of Alabama 1975, to include proof of participating in a nontraditional high school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) (1) A student who withdraws from high school, and,  
84 within one year after withdrawing enrolls in a nontraditional



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85 high school diploma option program, may not be counted as a  
86 dropout for purposes of the graduation rate calculations of  
87 his or her high school on the State Report Card.

88 (2) The ACCS, in collaboration with the department and  
89 local education agencies, shall track program participation,  
90 student retention, and high school diplomas awarded through  
91 the nontraditional high school diploma option to measure the  
92 effectiveness of the program. Commencing on January 1, 2026,  
93 and each January 1 thereafter, the Chancellor of the ACCS  
94 shall submit a summary of the information tracked to the  
95 Chairs of the House and Senate Education Policy Committees.

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

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

105 (1) Allowing an increase to the credit ratio for  
106 completion of postsecondary level instructional curricula  
107 related to career readiness, career pathways, and integrated  
108 education and training correlated to industry recognized  
109 credentials.

110 (2) Utilization of the Workforce Innovation and  
111 Opportunity Act; the Title II Adult Education and Family  
112 Literacy Act; and Measurable Skill Gain indicators as



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113 referenced by the United States Department of Education Office  
114 of Community, Technical, and Adult Education to accelerate the  
115 achievement of a high school diploma.

116 (3) Agreed upon state strategies to reduce the dropout  
117 rate by using the Adult Education Division of the Alabama  
118 Community College System network of providers as the primary  
119 option of choice for students who have withdrawn from high  
120 school to complete a high school diploma or its recognized  
121 equivalent.

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

124 "§16-28-3.1

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

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

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



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141           (2) Information provided during an exit interview by a  
142 local high school shall include materials describing available  
143 adult education programs and services offered by eligible  
144 adult education providers. The materials shall include, but  
145 not limited to, General Education Diploma (GED) preparation  
146 services, the nontraditional high school diploma option  
147 program, and other programs and pathways available for earning  
148 industry certifications and credentials. The materials shall  
149 be developed by the Adult Education Division of the Alabama  
150 Community College System and approved by the State Department  
151 of Education. The local high school shall also provide a  
152 withdrawing student with a copy of his or her academic  
153 records, including his or her current transcript, contact  
154 information for available counseling services, and any  
155 requested referrals to available adult education programs.

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

168           (1) Early intervention for students who fail Algebra I,



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169 or any ninth grade reading or math class, and have  
170 insufficient credits to be promoted.

171 (2) Alternative education programs designed to reengage  
172 dropouts including, but not limited to, dual enrollment  
173 courses at the community college level and participation in  
174 the nontraditional high school diploma option.

175 (3) Increased availability of advanced placement  
176 courses.

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

180 (5) Flexible programs for older students who are  
181 currently not enrolled.

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

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

196 (8) Strategies that are specifically designed to





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197 improve high school graduation rates for those teenagers who  
198 are at the highest risk of dropping out, including, but not  
199 limited to, students in the foster care system, pregnant  
200 students, student parents, English as second language  
201 students, and students with special educational needs.

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

208 (1) The total number of high school suspensions related  
209 to truancy.

210 (2) The total number of students enrolled in  
211 alternative education programs, including the nontraditional  
212 high school diploma option.

213 (3) The total number of students who have been  
214 reenrolled in programs with flexible schedules or community  
215 college programs.

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

218 (5) The total number of students who are repeating the  
219 ninth grade.

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

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



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

227 (2) Any planned modification of school system dropout  
228 prevention strategies and activities, based on the data  
229 compiled.

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

239 "§16-28-40

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

248 (1) The individual is enrolled and making satisfactory  
249 progress in a nontraditional high school diploma option  
250 program or a course leading to a general educational  
251 development certificate (GED) from a state approved  
252 institution or organization, or has obtained the certificate.



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

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

260 (4) The individual is gainfully and substantially  
261 employed.

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

264 (6) A physician certifies that the parents of the  
265 individual depend on him or her as their sole source of  
266 transportation.

267 (7) The individual is exempted from this requirement  
268 due to circumstances beyond his or her control as provided in  
269 this chapter.

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

279 (2) Upon the request of a student seeking a fee  
280 exemption on the basis of his or her homelessness, the staff



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281 member designated to act as the local educational agency  
282 liaison for homeless children and youth, pursuant to 42 U.S.C.  
283 § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii), shall provide documentation that the  
284 student is a qualified student, on a form approved by the  
285 State Department of Education, for presentation to the Alabama  
286 State Law Enforcement Agency, on application for, or renewal,  
287 reinstatement, or replacement of a driver's license. The term  
288 "qualified student" refers to a student who the local  
289 educational agency liaison for homeless children and youth  
290 verifies as meeting the definition of a "homeless child or  
291 youth" as provided by 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2) and whose  
292 enrollment status and disciplinary points have been documented  
293 pursuant to subdivision (1).

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

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

307 (d) Whenever the withdrawal from school of the student,  
308 or the failure of the student to enroll in a course leading to



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

330 (e) (1) Any individual over the age of 14 who is  
331 convicted of the crime of possession of a pistol on the  
332 premises of a public school, or a public school bus, or both,  
333 under Section 13A-11-72 shall be denied issuance of a driver's  
334 permit or license for the operation of a motor vehicle for 180  
335 days from the date the individual is eligible and applies for  
336 a permit or license for the operation of a motor vehicle. Any



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337 adjudication as a juvenile delinquent or youthful offender  
338 where the underlying charge is the possession of a pistol on  
339 the premises of a public school, or a public school bus, or  
340 both, under Section 13A-11-72 shall be considered a conviction  
341 under this subsection, and the adjudication of an individual  
342 as a juvenile delinquent or youthful offender where the  
343 underlying charge is a violation under Section 13A-11-72 shall  
344 be reported to the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency.

345 (2) If an individual over the age of 14 years possesses  
346 a driver's license on the date of conviction, the Alabama  
347 State Law Enforcement Agency, within five days of receipt of a  
348 notice of conviction from the court, shall send notice to the  
349 licensee that his or her driver's license will be suspended.  
350 The notice shall state that the license will be suspended for  
351 180 days commencing on the 30th day following the date the  
352 notice was sent unless documentation is received by the agency  
353 before the 30th day that the individual was not convicted of  
354 the crime. Upon the appropriate date, the agency shall suspend  
355 the license.

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



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365 order of suspension or denial by the secretary or the  
366 authorized agent of the secretary in the same manner and under  
367 the same conditions as is provided in the case of suspensions  
368 and denials.

369 (4) If the conviction is reversed within the 180-day  
370 period, the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency, upon receipt  
371 of notice of the reversal from the Administrative Office of  
372 Courts, shall reinstate a suspended license and shall accept  
373 an application for a license and shall issue the license  
374 according to law and regulation.

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

383 Section 3. This act shall become effective on June 1,  
384 2025.



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House of Representatives

Read for the first time and referred .....12-Feb-25  
to the House of Representatives  
committee on Education Policy  
  
Read for the second time and placed .....20-Feb-25  
on the calendar:  
1 amendment  
  
Read for the third time and passed .....25-Feb-25  
as amended  
Yeas 103  
Nays 0  
Abstains 0

John Treadwell  
Clerk