

HB266 ENROLLED



1 HB266
2 5VLQH66-3
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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1 Enrolled, An Act,

2
3 Relating to public education; to create the Restoring
4 Educational Advancement of Completing High School (REACH) Act;
5 to establish a nontraditional high school diploma option,
6 through the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community
7 College System, as an additional pathway through which a
8 student may earn a high school diploma; to provide for the
9 duties of the Alabama Community College System, the State
10 Superintendent of Education, and the State Department of
11 Education; to require the Alabama Community College System to
12 annually summarize and report on the effectiveness of the
13 program to the Legislature; to amend Section 16-28-3.1, Code
14 of Alabama 1975, to provide further for the information
15 provided to a student and his or her parents or legal guardian
16 during the exit interview from high school and to require the
17 sharing of data between the State Department of Education and
18 the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community College
19 System regarding students who have withdrawn from high school;
20 and to amend Section 16-28-40, Code of Alabama 1975, to
21 include proof of participating in a nontraditional high school
22 diploma option program as a reason to allow an individual
23 under the age of 19 to receive a driver's or learner's
24 license.

25 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

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



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

(1) ACCS. The Alabama Community College System.

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

(3) DEPARTMENT. The State Department of Education.

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

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

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

(2) The ACCS shall develop, implement, and continually evaluate the effectiveness of the nontraditional high school diploma option program to ensure that the curricula of the program is aligned with public high school diploma requirements. The ACCS shall also oversee the management and control of each nontraditional high school diploma option program offered.

(d) (1) The ACCS, through its network of community and



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technical colleges, shall work with local education agencies throughout the state to implement the nontraditional high school diploma option at the local level. Local education agencies shall actively promote the availability of the nontraditional high school diploma option to at-risk juniors and seniors. Additionally, the Adult Education Division of the ACCS, in conjunction with the department, shall oversee a statewide awareness campaign to ensure that students, parents, and educators throughout the state are informed about the opportunities and supports available through this program.

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

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

b. Reasonable accommodations for participants.

c. Appropriate support services for participants.

(e) (1) A student who withdraws from high school, and, within one year after withdrawing enrolls in a nontraditional high school diploma option program, may not be counted as a dropout for purposes of the graduation rate calculations of his or her high school on the State Report Card.

(2) The ACCS, in collaboration with the department and local education agencies, shall track program participation, student retention, and high school diplomas awarded through the nontraditional high school diploma option to measure the



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effectiveness of the program. Commencing on January 1, 2026, and each January 1 thereafter, the Chancellor of the ACCS shall submit a summary of the information tracked to the Chairs of the House and Senate Education Policy Committees.

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

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

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

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

(3) Agreed upon state strategies to reduce the dropout rate by using the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community College System network of providers as the primary option of choice for students who have withdrawn from high



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113 school to complete a high school diploma or its recognized
114 equivalent.

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

117 "§16-28-3.1

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

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

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

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



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industry certifications and credentials. The materials shall be developed by the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community College System and approved by the State Department of Education. The local high school shall also provide a withdrawing student with a copy of his or her academic records, including his or her current transcript, contact information for available counseling services, and any requested referrals to available adult education programs.

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

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

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

(3) Increased availability of advanced placement



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169 courses.

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

173 (5) Flexible programs for older students who are
174 currently not enrolled.

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

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

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

195 (c) ~~The department~~ State Department of Education, in
196 addition to other information and data, shall compile all of



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the following data to ensure that the dropout prevention program, and local versions of the program, are based upon evidence-based research, are data-driven, and show continuous improvement in all of the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(e) Each local education agency shall report to the State Department of Education, on a quarterly or more frequent



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basis, student withdrawal data. This data shall include specific information regarding the names and number of students who have withdrawn from each school district. The State Department of Education shall enter into a data sharing agreement with the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community College System so this data may be accessed as needed."

"§16-28-40

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

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

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

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



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(4) The individual is gainfully and substantially employed.

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

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

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

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

(2) Upon the request of a student seeking a fee exemption on the basis of his or her homelessness, the staff member designated to act as the local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youth, pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii), shall provide documentation that the student is a qualified student, on a form approved by the State Department of Education, for presentation to the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency, on application for, or renewal, reinstatement, or replacement of a driver's license. The term



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"qualified student" refers to a student who the local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youth verifies as meeting the definition of a "homeless child or youth" as provided by 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2) and whose enrollment status and disciplinary points have been documented pursuant to subdivision (1).

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

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

(d) Whenever the withdrawal from school of the student, or the failure of the student to enroll in a course leading to or to obtain a GED or high school diploma, is beyond the control of the student, or is for the purpose of transfer to another school as confirmed in writing by the parent or guardian of the student, or is for the purpose of participating in a job training program approved by the State Superintendent of Education, no notice shall be sent by the proper school official to the Alabama State Law Enforcement



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Agency to suspend the license of the student. If the student is applying for or renewing a driver's license or a learner's license, the attendance officer or chief attendance administrator, upon request, shall provide the student with documentation to present to the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency to exempt the student from this section. The local superintendent of education with the assistance of the county or city school attendance director as the case may be, and any other staff or school personnel, or the appropriate school official of any private secondary school, shall be the sole judge of whether the withdrawal is due to circumstances beyond the control of the individual. Suspension or expulsion from school or imprisonment in a jail or penitentiary is not a circumstance beyond the control of ~~a~~ an individual.

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



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be reported to the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency.

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

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

(4) If the conviction is reversed within the 180-day period, the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency, upon receipt of notice of the reversal from the Administrative Office of



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Courts, shall reinstate a suspended license and shall accept an application for a license and shall issue the license according to law and regulation.

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

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



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Speaker of the House of Representatives

President and Presiding Officer of the Senate

House of Representatives

I hereby certify that the within Act originated in and
was passed by the House 25-Feb-25.

John Treadwell
Clerk

Senate

06-May-25

Passed