

## HB266 INTRODUCED



1 HB266  
2 NINVJ8J-1  
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



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28

SYNOPSIS:

Under existing law, there are limited alternative pathways through which a student who has withdrawn from high school may earn a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

This bill would create the Restoring Educational Advancement of Completing High School (REACH) Act and would provide for a nontraditional high school diploma option and program as an additional means through which a student who withdraws from high school before graduation may obtain a traditional high school diploma through the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community College System.

This bill would require certain information to be provided to a student during the high school exit interview.

This bill would 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of Education and the Adult Education Division of the Alabama Community College System regarding students who have withdrawn from high school.

This bill would also include proof of participating in a nontraditional high school diploma option program as a reason to allow an individual under the age of 19 to receive a driver's license or



## HB266 INTRODUCED

29 learner's license.

30

31

32

33

A BILL

34

TO BE ENTITLED

35

AN ACT

36

37

38

39

40

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

51

52

53

54

55

56

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 diploma option program as a reason to allow an individual



## HB266 INTRODUCED

57 under the age of 19 to receive a driver's or learner's  
58 license.

59 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

76 (c) (1) The ACCS, in collaboration with the State  
77 Superintendent of Education, shall establish a nontraditional  
78 high school diploma option for students who are 17 years of  
79 age or older and who have withdrawn from high school before  
80 graduating pursuant to Section 16-28-3.1, Code of Alabama  
81 1975, as a means for those students to earn a high school  
82 diploma.

83 (2) The ACCS shall develop, implement, and continually  
84 evaluate the effectiveness of the nontraditional high school



## HB266 INTRODUCED

85 diploma option program to ensure that the curricula of the  
86 program is aligned with public high school diploma  
87 requirements. The ACCS shall also oversee the management and  
88 control of each nontraditional high school diploma option  
89 program offered.

90 (d) (1) The ACCS, through its network of community and  
91 technical colleges, shall work with local education agencies  
92 throughout the state to implement the nontraditional high  
93 school diploma option at the local level. Local education  
94 agencies shall actively promote the availability of the  
95 nontraditional high school diploma option to at-risk juniors  
96 and seniors. Additionally, the Adult Education Division of the  
97 ACCS, in conjunction with the department, shall oversee a  
98 statewide awareness campaign to ensure that students, parents,  
99 and educators throughout the state are informed about the  
100 opportunities and supports available through this program.

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

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

108 b. Reasonable accommodations for participants.

109 c. Appropriate support services for participants.

110 (e) The ACCS, in collaboration with the department and  
111 local education agencies, shall track program participation,  
112 student retention, and high school diplomas awarded through



## HB266 INTRODUCED

113 the nontraditional high school diploma option to measure the  
114 effectiveness of the program. Commencing on January 1, 2026,  
115 and each January 1 thereafter, the Chancellor of the ACCS  
116 shall submit a summary of the information tracked to the  
117 Chairs of the House and Senate Education Policy Committees.

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

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

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

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

138 (3) Agreed upon state strategies to reduce the dropout  
139 rate by using the Adult Education Division of the Alabama  
140 Community College System network of providers as the primary



## HB266 INTRODUCED

141 option of choice for students who have withdrawn from high  
142 school to complete a high school diploma or its recognized  
143 equivalent.

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

146 "§16-28-3.1

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

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

152 ~~(2)~~ b. An exit interview is conducted where the student  
153 and the student's parent or legal guardian have been advised  
154 that withdrawal from school shall likely reduce the student's  
155 future earning potential and increase the student's likelihood  
156 of being unemployed in the future. During the exit interview,  
157 the student who is withdrawing from school shall be given  
158 information that has been prepared and supplied by the State  
159 Department of Education regarding the detrimental impacts and  
160 effects of early withdrawal from school along with any  
161 available training and employment opportunity programs,  
162 provided such information is available.

163 (2) Information provided during an exit interview by a  
164 local high school shall include materials describing available  
165 adult education programs and services offered by eligible  
166 adult education providers. The materials shall include, but  
167 not limited to, General Education Diploma (GED) preparation  
168 services, the nontraditional high school diploma option



## HB266 INTRODUCED

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

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

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

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





## HB266 INTRODUCED

197 (3) Increased availability of advanced placement  
198 courses.

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

202 (5) Flexible programs for older students who are  
203 currently not enrolled.

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

208 (7) Teacher advisories and other supports that are  
209 designed to specifically address the needs of those students  
210 who are most at risk of dropping out of school by providing  
211 opportunities to build positive connections with peers and  
212 teachers and providing assistance with course selection,  
213 school performance, and completion of graduation requirements.  
214 Students who are most at risk of dropping out of school  
215 include, but are not limited to, those students who move  
216 often, have poor attendance, or have multiple suspensions or  
217 discipline issues.

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

224 (c) The ~~department~~ [State Department of Education](#), in



## HB266 INTRODUCED

225 addition to other information and data, shall compile all of  
226 the following data to ensure that the dropout prevention  
227 program, and local versions of the program, are based upon  
228 evidence-based research, are data-driven, and show continuous  
229 improvement in all of the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

252 (e) Each local education agency shall report to the



## HB266 INTRODUCED

253 State Department of Education, on a quarterly or more frequent  
254 basis, student withdrawal data. This data shall include  
255 specific information regarding the names and number of  
256 students who have withdrawn from each school district. The  
257 State Department of Education shall enter into a data sharing  
258 agreement with the Adult Education Division of the Alabama  
259 Community College System so this data may be accessed as  
260 needed."

261 "§16-28-40

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

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

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

280 (3) The individual is participating in a job training



## HB266 INTRODUCED

281 program approved by the State Superintendent of Education.

282 (4) The individual is gainfully and substantially  
283 employed.

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

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

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

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

301 (2) Upon the request of a student seeking a fee  
302 exemption on the basis of his or her homelessness, the staff  
303 member designated to act as the local educational agency  
304 liaison for homeless children and youth, pursuant to 42 U.S.C.  
305 § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii), shall provide documentation that the  
306 student is a qualified student, on a form approved by the  
307 State Department of Education, for presentation to the Alabama  
308 State Law Enforcement Agency, on application for, or renewal,



## HB266 INTRODUCED

309 reinstatement, or replacement of a driver's license. The term  
310 "qualified student" refers to a student who the local  
311 educational agency liaison for homeless children and youth  
312 verifies as meeting the definition of a "homeless child or  
313 youth" as provided by 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2) and whose  
314 enrollment status and disciplinary points have been documented  
315 pursuant to subdivision (1).

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

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

329 (d) Whenever the withdrawal from school of the student,  
330 or the failure of the student to enroll in a course leading to  
331 or to obtain a GED or high school diploma, is beyond the  
332 control of the student, or is for the purpose of transfer to  
333 another school as confirmed in writing by the parent or  
334 guardian of the student, or is for the purpose of  
335 participating in a job training program approved by the State  
336 Superintendent of Education, no notice shall be sent by the



## HB266 INTRODUCED

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

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



## HB266 INTRODUCED

365 underlying charge is a violation under Section 13A-11-72 shall  
366 be reported to the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency.

367 (2) If an individual over the age of 14 years possesses  
368 a driver's license on the date of conviction, the Alabama  
369 State Law Enforcement Agency, within five days of receipt of a  
370 notice of conviction from the court, shall send notice to the  
371 licensee that his or her driver's license will be suspended.  
372 The notice shall state that the license will be suspended for  
373 180 days commencing on the 30th day following the date the  
374 notice was sent unless documentation is received by the agency  
375 before the 30th day that the individual was not convicted of  
376 the crime. Upon the appropriate date, the agency shall suspend  
377 the license.

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

391 (4) If the conviction is reversed within the 180-day  
392 period, the Alabama State Law Enforcement Agency, upon receipt



## HB266 INTRODUCED

393 of notice of the reversal from the Administrative Office of  
394 Courts, shall reinstate a suspended license and shall accept  
395 an application for a license and shall issue the license  
396 according to law and regulation.

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

405 Section 3. This act shall become effective on June 1,  
406 2025.