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SYNOPSIS:

This bill would enact the Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence (RAISE) Act to establish a process to provide additional funding for public K-12 schools for the purpose of addressing the educational needs of the student population and improving educational outcomes.

This bill would also require the State Department of Education to develop a unified application that streamlines applications and reporting for all state and federal funding programs away from multiple plans and reports into a single application.

A BILL
TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

Relating to the funding of public K-12 education; to add Article 16 to Chapter 13 of Title 16, commencing with Section 16-13-360, to the Code of Alabama 1975; to create the Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence (RAISE) Act; to establish a process to provide additional funding for public K-12 schools for the purpose of addressing the



29 educational needs of the student population and improving
30 outcomes; to establish the Renewing Alabama's Investment in
31 Student Excellence (RAISE) Fund and provide for its funding
32 and appropriation; to require reporting of student data by
33 local education agencies; to establish priorities for use of
34 the additional funding; to establish goals for student
35 achievement; to require accountability reports on the
36 expenditure and use of the additional funding through the
37 Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence (RAISE)
38 Fund; to establish a review committee on the Renewing
39 Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence (RAISE) Act to
40 identify needed revisions for continued improvement; to
41 establish an accountability review board to review
42 accountability reports and progress in achieving student
43 achievement goals; and to require the State Department of
44 Education to develop a unified application that streamlines
45 applications and reporting for all state and federal funding
46 programs.

47 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

48 Section 1. Article 16 is added to Chapter 13 of Title
49 16, Code of Alabama 1975, commencing with Section 16-13-360,
50 to read as follows:

51 §16-13-360

52 This act shall be known and may be cited as the
53 Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence (RAISE)
54 Act.

55 §16-13-361

56 For purposes of this act, the following terms have the



57 following meanings:

58 (1) AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP (ADM). Average enrollment
59 from the first 20 days of school after Labor Day of the
60 preceding year.

61 (2) BASE FUNDING FACTOR. The sum certified by the
62 Legislative Fiscal Officer prior to October 1 of each fiscal
63 year beginning with the 2025-2026 fiscal year and calculated
64 by dividing the total state and local cost of the Foundation
65 Program by the average daily membership for the immediately
66 preceding fiscal year, using the Foundation Program State
67 Allocation report for the enacted Education Trust Fund
68 appropriations act.

69 (3) CHARTER SCHOOL. A public charter school as defined
70 in Section 16-6F-4.

71 (4) COMMISSION. The Alabama Commission on the
72 Evaluation of Services (ACES).

73 (5) CONCENTRATED ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS. A large
74 percentage of students in a local education agency having been
75 identified as English Language Learners as defined in this
76 act.

77 (6) DEPARTMENT. The State Department of Education.

78 (7) DIRECT CERTIFICATION. A process conducted by the
79 state and local educational agencies (LEAs) to certify
80 eligible children for free meals without the need for
81 household applications. If changes in the direct certification
82 process occur, the department may recommend alternative
83 measures that could be utilized in its place.

84 (8) ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ELL). A student



85 identified in accordance with federal or state law as entitled
86 to receive English as a second language or bilingual services
87 on the basis of the student's English language proficiency.

88 (9) FOUNDATION PROGRAM. The program established in
89 Article 11 of Chapter 13 of Title 16, to provide the basic
90 funding support for public K-12 schools.

91 (10) GIFTED STUDENT. A student who gives evidence of
92 high achievement capability in areas such as intellectual,
93 creative, artistic, or leadership capacity, or in specific
94 academic fields, and who needs services or activities not
95 ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop
96 those capabilities or as defined by state law.

97 (11) LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY (LEA). A county board of
98 education, city board of education, or charter school.

99 (12) PUBLIC SCHOOL. A school within an LEA providing
100 instruction in grades K-12 that is supported by public funds.

101 (13) RAISE ACT ACCOUNTABILITY AND IMPLEMENTATION BOARD.
102 The board established in Section 16-13-367 to monitor the
103 progress of LEAs and schools in reaching their goals of
104 achievement and to ensure that RAISE Act funds are spent
105 effectively.

106 (14) RAISE ACT REVIEW COMMITTEE. The committee
107 established in Section 16-13-366 to determine the
108 effectiveness of the RAISE Act program and any needed
109 revisions for continuous improvement.

110 (15) RENEWING ALABAMA'S INVESTMENT IN STUDENT
111 EXCELLENCE FUND (RAISE FUND). The fund established by this act
112 to provide additional funding to local education agencies to



113 address the educational needs of students in public K-12
114 schools.

115 (16) SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT. A child who has been
116 identified with at least one of the specifically defined
117 physical, emotional, learning, or cognitive disabilities and
118 is identified for special education services under the
119 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400
120 et seq, or as otherwise defined in state law.

121 (17) STATE BOARD. The State Board of Education.

122 (18) STATE SUPERINTENDENT. The State Superintendent of
123 Education.

124 (19) UNIFIED APPLICATION. A system that aligns policy
125 priorities, planning, and budgeting for LEAs in one
126 application and streamlines applications and reporting for all
127 state and federal funding programs.

128 (20) WEIGHTED ALLOCATION. Additional funding from the
129 RAISE Fund for each qualifying student, the value of which
130 shall be calculated by multiplying the percentage for each
131 weighted allocation by the base funding factor.

132 §16-13-362

133 (a) There is established a fund in the State Treasury
134 for the public schools of this state which shall be known as
135 the Renewing Alabama's Investment in Student Excellence
136 (RAISE) Fund. The fund shall be used to provide additional
137 funding for public schools for the purpose of addressing the
138 educational needs of the student population and improving
139 student outcomes as provided in this article. The fund shall
140 be comprised of all funds appropriated from the Education



141 Trust Fund or allocated by the Legislature from other funds
142 for the purposes of this act. The Legislature shall
143 appropriate or allocate to this fund amounts sufficient to
144 sustain the operation of the RAISE Act. All funds allocated to
145 the RAISE Fund shall remain in the fund and not revert or be
146 expended for any other purpose other than those set out in
147 this act.

148 (b) The fund shall be administered and distributed in
149 accordance with this act and the provisions of the annual
150 Education Trust Fund appropriations act. The additional
151 funding appropriated pursuant to this act is subject to and
152 shall be allocated only in accordance with funding as provided
153 by the Legislature in the annual Education Trust Fund
154 appropriations act or other legislative act and shall be
155 budgeted and allotted in accordance with Sections 41-4-80
156 through 41-4-96 and Sections 41-19-1 through 41-19-12. Any
157 monetary interest that accrues to the RAISE Fund shall be
158 retained in the fund from year to year and shall be subject
159 only to this act.

160 (c) Any LEA as defined in this act shall be eligible to
161 receive an allocation from the RAISE Fund, subject to the
162 following conditions:

163 (1) The LEA provides the data required in Section
164 16-13-363.

165 (2) The LEA provides the accountability plan and
166 reports required in Section 16-13-365.

167 (3) The LEA ensures that all funds received from the
168 RAISE Fund are used to serve the student groups that generated



169 the funds under Section 16-13-364.

170 (4) The LEA submits the unified application, including
171 data and accountability reports through the unified
172 application for the 2028-2029 school year and thereafter, as
173 required in Section 16-13-368.

174 §16-13-363

175 (a) The department shall implement this act commencing
176 with the 2025-2026 school year contingent upon funding being
177 appropriated by the Legislature for such purpose.

178 (b) The funding described in this act shall be
179 allocated in accordance with this act and rules adopted by the
180 state board.

181 (c) On or before July 1, 2025, and each June 1
182 thereafter until the unified application created pursuant to
183 Section 16-13-368 is implemented, the department shall create
184 and publish a RAISE Act guide outlining the department's
185 procedures for administering this act. At a minimum, the RAISE
186 Act guide shall:

187 (1) Identify the data the department must receive from
188 each LEA for purposes of administering this act; and

189 (2) Explain how and when the data identified in
190 subdivision (1) shall be submitted to the department.

191 (d) The department shall create or procure, and make
192 available no later than January 1, 2027, and at no cost to
193 participants, a professional learning series on the RAISE Act.
194 The series must include, at a minimum, an overview of the
195 RAISE Act, its logistics and data, the investments that will
196 increase student achievement of the student group generating



197 weighted allocations through the RAISE Fund, and how to budget
198 the additional funding provided by the RAISE Fund for the
199 specific purposes outlined in the annual Education Trust Fund
200 appropriations act. LEA employees that are involved in
201 budgeting at the school and system level, such as
202 superintendents, assistant superintendents, chief school
203 finance officers, other school business officers, and
204 principals of schools, including leaders from public charter
205 schools, shall be required to participate in the RAISE Act
206 professional learning series. The department shall also make
207 the professional learning series on the RAISE Act available to
208 education leaders, LEA employees, and other interested
209 stakeholders.

210 (e) A professional learning series created or procured
211 pursuant to this section may be provided to participants
212 virtually or in person at the discretion of the department.
213 The department shall make all instructional materials used as
214 part of the series publicly available on the department's
215 website.

216 (f) Beginning in the 2028-2029 school year, the
217 professional learning series on the RAISE Act shall be
218 incorporated into the professional learning series on the
219 unified application created in Section 16-13-368.

220 §16-13-364

221 (a) (1) DETERMINING THE ANNUAL COST OF THE RAISE
222 PROGRAM. Subject to available funding for the RAISE Fund for
223 any fiscal year of the state, the RAISE Fund weighted
224 allocations for each qualifying student group shall be



225 established in the annual Education Trust Fund appropriations
226 act for that fiscal year and shall include weights for:

- 227 a. Poverty;
- 228 b. Special education;
- 229 c. English Language Learners;
- 230 d. Charter school students;
- 231 e. Gifted students; and
- 232 f. Other student groups as deemed necessary.

233 (2) The amount of funds determined necessary and
234 available to provide the weighted allocations shall be
235 appropriated from the RAISE Fund by the Legislature in the
236 annual Education Trust Fund appropriations act.

237 (3) The weighted percentages established in this
238 subsection may grow over time, as funding allows and
239 determined necessary, but not to exceed the maximum weighted
240 percentages established in this section.

241 (4) The weighted allocation for each qualifying student
242 shall be calculated by multiplying the percentage for each
243 weighted allocation by the base funding factor. LEAs will
244 receive weighted allocations for each qualifying student in
245 each student group.

246 (5) It is the intent of the Legislature that LEAs are
247 given flexibility in spending decisions when serving the needs
248 of the student groups that generated the funds. Flexibility
249 shall include the ability for LEAs to combine or shift funding
250 across student groups that generated the funds to best serve
251 students with the greatest need, while meeting federal
252 maintenance of effort requirements under the Individuals with



253 Disabilities Education Act 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq. LEAs with
254 conversion charter schools shall allocate to the conversion
255 charter school operator all weighted allocations generated by
256 the students at the conversion charter school.

257 (b) The weighted allocations for each qualifying
258 student shall be established as follows:

259 (1) A student who is identified through direct
260 certification shall generate weighted allocations for poverty
261 up to 20 percent.

262 (2) A student who is identified for special education
263 services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
264 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq. shall generate a weight based on any
265 exceptionality identified in their Individual Education Plan
266 (IEP). Three tiers shall be established in the annual
267 Education Trust Fund appropriations act, with input from the
268 department, based on the additional resources required to
269 support students in each special education tier. A student
270 shall generate a weighted allocation for each tier as follows:

271 a. The weighted allocation for a Tier I is within a
272 range of up to 25 percent.

273 b. The weighted allocation for a Tier II is within a
274 range of up to 50 percent.

275 c. The weighted allocation for a Tier III is within a
276 range of up to 150 percent.

277 (3) A student who is identified as an English Language
278 Learner (ELL) shall generate a weighted allocation of up to 15
279 percent. A student shall generate an additional weighted
280 allocation for concentrated ELL within a range of up to five



281 percent if the students' LEA has a percentage of ELL students
282 enrolled that is at or above the level specified in the
283 Education Trust Fund appropriations act.

284 (4) An LEA shall generate a gifted student weighted
285 allocation within a range of up to five percent, with an
286 assumption that five percent of its ADM is made up of gifted
287 students. The LEA may use these funds for any gifted or
288 enrichment program for students who give evidence of high
289 achievement capability.

290 (5) A student at a public charter school shall generate
291 a weighted allocation within a range of up to 10 percent. This
292 weighted allocation shall only be allocated to charter schools
293 that are physically located in a county or city school system
294 that receives local funding from all revenue sources exceeding
295 the value of 10 mills of ad valorem taxes for that county or
296 city school system.

297 (c) A student shall generate funding for each weight
298 for which that student qualifies.

299 (d) Funding allocations made pursuant to this section
300 are based on data collected for an LEA during the immediately
301 preceding school year and reported to the department pursuant
302 to Section 16-13-363.

303 (e) When making future funding decisions, priority
304 shall be given to the special education weight in order to
305 meet the federal maintenance of effort requirements under the
306 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 20 U.S.C. § 1400
307 et seq.

308 §16-13-365



309 (a) Each LEA shall produce an accountability plan and
310 report that:

311 (1) Establishes goals for the achievement of qualifying
312 students in weighted categories. These goals shall be in
313 alignment with the student achievement goals established in
314 Alabama's plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) or
315 its successors, and guidance provided by the department;

316 (2) Describes the LEA's planned expenditures at the
317 system and school level for student groups receiving weighted
318 allocations through the RAISE Fund; and

319 (3) Provides an analysis on the previous years progress
320 on student groups receiving weighted allocations through the
321 RAISE Fund and any needed revisions to spending. This will
322 begin for the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

323 (b) The report required by this section must be
324 submitted to the department by November 1, 2026, and each
325 November 1 thereafter until the unified application created
326 pursuant to Section 16-13-368 is implemented. Beginning no
327 later than the 2028-2029 school year, the report shall be
328 submitted using the unified application created pursuant to
329 Section 16-13-368. Prior to the unified application becoming
330 available, the department shall provide an accountability plan
331 and report format for LEAs to submit information outlined in
332 this section.

333 (c) The department shall add a section to the
334 department's Education Report Card website established
335 pursuant to Chapter 6C of Title 16, Code of Alabama 1975,
336 where additional funding for each student group that receives



337 a weighted allocation through the RAISE Fund is reported
338 alongside the academic outcomes of students from those groups
339 on state summative assessments. This section shall be added to
340 the department's Education Report Cards for the state, every
341 LEA, and every school. The following should be reported:

342 (1) Academic outcomes shall be disaggregated by each
343 student group that receives a weighted allocation through the
344 RAISE Act and include both academic achievement and growth on
345 state summative assessments.

346 (2) Total and per-pupil funding disaggregated by each
347 student group that receives a weighted allocation through the
348 RAISE Act.

349 §16-13-366

350 (a) By January 1, 2028, the Legislature shall establish
351 the RAISE Act Review Committee to review the overall progress
352 of the RAISE Act and make recommendations for continuous
353 improvement.

354 (b) The committee shall be led by the Chair of the
355 Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee and the Chair
356 of the House Ways and Means Education Committee.

357 (c) The membership of the committee shall include the
358 following:

359 (1) The Governor, or his or her designee.

360 (2) The State Superintendent of Education, or his or
361 her designee.

362 (3) The Director of Finance, or his or her designee.

363 (4) The Chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation
364 Education Committee.



365 (5) The Chair of the House Ways and Means Education
366 Committee.

367 (6) The Chair of the Senate Education Policy Committee.

368 (7) The Chair of the House Education Policy Committee.

369 (8) One member of the Senate, appointed by the
370 President Pro Tempore of the Senate.

371 (9) One member of the Senate, appointed by the Minority
372 Leader of the Senate.

373 (10) One member of the House of Representatives,
374 appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

375 (11) One member of the House of Representatives,
376 appointed by the Minority Leader of the House of
377 Representatives.

378 (d) The RAISE Act Review Committee shall meet at least
379 one time per year before November 1 and shall regularly review
380 the RAISE base funding factor and weighted allocations, review
381 the academic data from each student group targeted through
382 weighted allocations at the state and LEA levels to determine
383 the effectiveness of the RAISE program, and identify any
384 needed revisions for continuous improvement to the RAISE Act.

385 (e) The RAISE Act Review Committee shall prepare an
386 annual report on the RAISE Act and shall provide the report,
387 on or before November 1 of each year, to the Governor, the
388 State Board of Education, the Senate Finance and Taxation
389 Education Committee, the House Ways and Means Education
390 Committee, the Senate Education Policy Committee, and the
391 House Education Policy Committee, and the public. The report
392 must include a review of academic achievement and growth data



393 from each student group targeted through weighted allocations
394 at the state and LEA levels and recommendations on needed
395 revisions to the RAISE Act. ACES may provide research and
396 analysis to support the work of the committee.

397 §16-13-367

398 (a) By July 1, 2028, the Legislature shall establish
399 the RAISE Act Accountability and Implementation Board to
400 establish a hearing process to monitor the progress of LEAs
401 and schools to ensure that RAISE Act funds are spent
402 effectively and hold them accountable for results.

403 (b) The RAISE Act Accountability and Implementation
404 Board shall be led by the Chair of the Senate Finance and
405 Taxation Education Committee and the Chair of the House Ways
406 and Means Education Committee.

407 (c) The membership of the RAISE Act Accountability and
408 Implementation Board shall include the following:

409 (1) The Governor, or his or her designee.

410 (2) The State Superintendent of Education.

411 (3) The Chair of the Senate Finance and Taxation
412 Education Committee.

413 (4) The Chair of the House Ways and Means Education
414 Committee.

415 (5) The Chair of the Senate Education Policy Committee.

416 (6) The Chair of the House Education Policy Committee.

417 (7) One member with school turnaround experience and/or
418 education policy experience appointed by the President Pro
419 Tempore of the Senate.

420 (8) One member with school turnaround experience and/or



421 education policy experience appointed by the Minority Leader
422 of the Senate.

423 (9) One member with school turnaround experience and/or
424 education policy experience appointed by the Speaker of the
425 House of Representatives.

426 (10) One member with school turnaround experience
427 and/or education policy experience appointed by the Minority
428 Leader of the House of Representatives.

429 (11) Two members of the Office of School Improvement
430 team appointed by the State Superintendent.

431 (12) One member with experience in the charter school
432 sector appointed by the Governor.

433 (13) Two members with school turnaround experience
434 and/or education policy experience appointed by the Governor.

435 (d) If a member no longer meets the qualifications for
436 the member's position on the board, then the member's position
437 on the board is vacated and replaced by the appropriate
438 appointing authority.

439 (e) With the support of the department, the board shall
440 annually monitor progress of LEAs and schools, and review and
441 provide feedback on accountability plan and reports submitted
442 pursuant to Section 16-13-365.

443 (f) By July 1, 2030, the department shall propose a
444 hearing process to determine if RAISE Act funds are being used
445 by LEAs to adequately improve student outcomes for student
446 groups identified in this act. The hearing proposal shall
447 include the process, timeline, and metrics used to determine
448 adequate progress of LEAs. The RAISE Act Accountability and



449 Implementation Board shall approve or amend the proposed
450 hearing process.

451 (g) By July 1, 2033, at the end of a five-year period,
452 the department shall identify LEAs, or individual schools
453 under the jurisdiction of the LEA, that have not made adequate
454 progress in reaching the goals of achievement established
455 pursuant to Section 16-13-365, and shall recommend them for a
456 hearing before the RAISE Act Accountability and Implementation
457 Board. The RAISE Act Accountability and Implementation Board
458 shall approve or amend the department's list of recommended
459 LEAs. With the support of the department, the RAISE Act
460 Accountability and Implementation Board shall then hold the
461 hearings.

462 (h) Following any hearings, the department shall
463 recommend corrective action for LEAs or individual schools
464 under the jurisdiction of the LEAs. The RAISE Act
465 Accountability and Implementation Board shall approve or amend
466 any proposed corrective action. Corrective action may include,
467 but not be limited to, the loss of autonomy to make budgeting
468 decisions with RAISE Fund allocations; state academic
469 intervention; and/or other relevant academic interventions,
470 such as those included in the Alabama Numeracy Act in Section
471 16-6H-12.

472 §16-13-368

473 (a) The department shall develop, with the support of
474 an external partner with expertise in streamlining state and
475 federal funding, a unified application that aligns policy
476 priorities, planning, and budgeting in one application. The



477 unified application shall streamline applications and
478 reporting for all state and federal funding programs away from
479 multiple plans, applications, budgets, and reports into a
480 single application. The unified application shall be
481 operational for the 2028-2029 budget cycle.

482 (b) In implementing the unified application, the
483 department shall do all of the following:

484 (1) Set state priorities for funding that focus on
485 achieving key improvements for students and student outcomes.

486 (2) Align grants to support each spending priority,
487 maximize dollars leveraged for student outcomes, and eliminate
488 redundancies.

489 (3) Design an application process that meets state and
490 federal compliance requirements and ensures spending is
491 aligned with state priorities.

492 (4) Support LEAs to build a strong plan for student
493 learning and federal grant spending and articulate adequate
494 achievement and growth goals for students.

495 (5) Review applications against a set of criteria for
496 plan approval and discretionary awards.

497 (6) Approve and allocate funding that supports a clear
498 set of plans to support student achievement.

499 (c) As part of the development of the unified
500 application, the State Superintendent, with the support of an
501 external partner, shall conduct an audit to identify
502 out-of-date, unnecessary, or otherwise burdensome state laws,
503 regulations, reporting requirements, and processes that apply
504 to public schools. The audit shall include considerations and



505 recommendations from school and system leaders, educators,
506 advocates, and families. The State Superintendent shall file a
507 report with the Governor, Legislature, and the public by
508 November 1, 2026, outlining the findings of the review and
509 recommendations for corrective actions, including executive
510 orders, statutory changes, or regulatory reforms to empower
511 schools, reduce bureaucracy, and improve student achievement.

512 (d) Beginning June 1, 2025, the department shall
513 complete the following actions:

514 (1) Hire an external partner to support the audit and
515 development of the uniform application.

516 (2) Launch the audit established in subsection (c) and
517 the development of the uniform application.

518 (e) During the 2027-2028 school year, the department
519 shall complete the following actions:

520 (1) Complete the development of the unified application
521 no later than February 2028, to allow LEAs to be able to use
522 the unified application for strategic and financial planning
523 for the 2028-2029 school year.

524 (2) Develop and launch professional learning about the
525 unified application no later than February 2028.

526 (f) LEAs shall use the unified application to plan
527 their system's budget beginning with the 2028-2029 school
528 year.

529 Section 2. This act shall become effective on June 1,
530 2025.