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**VERSIONS OF THIS BILL**

[12/05/2024](https://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess126_2025-2026/prever/3197_20241205.docx)

A bill

TO AMEND THE SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS BY ADDING SECTION 59‑1‑485 SO AS TO ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE WORKFORCE READINESS GOAL; BY ADDING SECTION 59‑29‑245 SO AS TO PROVIDE REMEDIATION IN COURSES IN LITERACY AND MATHEMATICS TO HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS SEEKING POST‑SECONDARY STUDIES BUT LACKING REQUISITE ACADEMIC PREPARATION, TO PROVIDE THIS COURSEWORK MAY BE USED TO MEET HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, AND TO PROVIDE RELATED IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, AND THE STATE TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM; BY ADDING SECTION 59‑39‑105 SO AS TO PROVIDE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS SHALL COMPLETE AND SUBMIT A FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID BEFORE GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL, TO PROVIDE EXEMPTIONS, TO PROVIDE RELATED REQUIREMENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PROVISIONS, AND TO MAKE THESE PROVISIONS APPLICABLE BEGINNING WITH THE 2026‑2027 SCHOOL YEAR; BY AMENDING SECTION 59‑26‑35, RELATING TO EDUCATOR PREPARATION PROGRAM EVALUATIONS AND THE SOUTH CAROLINA EDUCATOR PREPARATION REPORT CARD, SO AS TO TRANSFER PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR CONDUCTING THESE EVALUATIONS AND PRODUCING THIS REPORT CARD TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, among other things; BY ADDING SECTION 41‑1‑140 SO AS TO PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE SHALL MAINTAIN AND PROVIDE FREE ONLINE ACCESS TO INFORMATION REGARDING THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF COLLEGE MAJORS, AMONG OTHER THINGS; AND BY INCREASING THE PERCENTAGE OF WORKING‑AGED ADULTS WITH POSTSECONDARY DEGREES OR INDUSTRY CREDENTIALS BY FACILITATING THE TRANSFER OF CERTAIN ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS TO THE STATE BOARD FOR TECHNICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION AND MAXIMIZING USE OF CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY CENTERS TO IMPROVE AND UPDATE CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Article 5, Chapter 1, Title 59 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

 Section 59‑1‑485. Recognizing that a vibrant workforce is critical to sustaining and growing the economy of this State by servicing existing industry and attracting new industry, the State of South Carolina must endeavor to increase the number of South Carolinians who are ready and able to fill jobs demanded by a dynamic and evolving economy to promote a statewide culture of excellence in education. To achieve this purpose, the State of South Carolina establishes a minimum overall statewide workforce readiness goal of at least sixty percent of all working‑aged South Carolinians having a high‑quality postsecondary degree or recognized industry credentials before the year 2032 unless a higher goal is established in the comprehensive statewide education and workforce development plan. This goal is consistent with all students graduating and having the knowledge, skills, and characteristics contained in the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate. The General Assembly is encouraged to reexamine and revise this goal on an ongoing basis as needed. The Commission on Higher Education must establish strategic timelines and milestones in the Commission’s Public Agenda to:

 (1) increase the number of students who obtain degrees and credentials in the STEM disciplines; (2) advance training and careers in STEM fields; and

 (3) expand the STEM‑capable workforce.

SECTION 2. Article 1, Chapter 29, Title 59 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

 Section 59‑29‑245. (A) The State Department of Education is directed to ensure that all public high schools, including charter high schools, provide academic remediation courses in high school literacy and mathematics for students in the senior year of high school who desire to pursue a postsecondary education but are not academically prepared for college‑level course work. Credits earned in these courses may be used to satisfy high school diploma elective credit requirements. The State Board of Education shall promulgate regulations directing when the courses may be offered and when they may be used to satisfy high school diploma elective credit requirements.

 (B)(1) The department shall collaborate with the South Carolina Technical College System to:

 (a) develop or adopt courses and curriculum that provide the necessary academic remediation needed. The State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education shall approve remedial courses developed or adopted by the department;

 (b) develop policies and guidelines that identify multiple measures or evidence that a student would benefit from the academic remediation courses, including:

 (i) assessment data from college readiness assessments;

 (ii) other standardized exams or locally developed exams used by technical colleges; and

 (iii) high school academic performance including grade point average and coursework.

 (2) Based upon the policies and guidelines developed pursuant to subitem (b), the department shall produce online documents to help guidance counselors and administrators explain the benefits of the courses to students, parents, and guardians. The documents shall also be made available to the public.

SECTION 3.A Article 1, Chapter 39, Title 59 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

 Section 59‑39‑105. (A) In addition to completing the units or credits of instruction required for graduation, each high school senior shall complete and submit a free application for federal student aid (“FAFSA” or “application”) before graduating from high school, except as provided in subsection (B).

 (B) A student is exempt from the requirements of subsection (A) if:

 (1) the parent or legal guardian of the student signs and submits the form provided in subsection (C) to authorize the student to decline to complete and submit the application;

 (2) the student signs and submits the form provided in subsection (C) on his own behalf, if the student is at least eighteen years of age and declines to complete and submit the application; or

 (3) a school counselor signs and submits the form provided in subsection (C) to authorize the student to decline to complete and submit the application for good cause, as determined by the school counselor. The school counselor is not required to state the basis for determining the existence of such good cause.

 (C) The State Board of Education shall develop and adopt a form for the purpose of declining to complete the application as described in subsection (B).

 (D) A school counselor who notifies a school district of a student’s compliance or noncompliance with this section for purposes of determining whether the student meets high school graduation requirements only may indicate whether the student has complied with this section and may not indicate the manner of compliance.

 (E) The State Board shall adopt rules as necessary to implement this section, including:

 (1) a timeline for the distribution to students of the application and the form adopted in subsections (B) and (C);

 (2) standards regarding the information that a school district or charter school must provide to students regarding:

 (a) instructions for filling out the application;

 (b) the options available to a student under subsection (B) if the student wishes to decline to complete and submit the application; and

 (c) the method by which a student must provide a school district or open enrollment charter school with proof that the student has completed and submitted the application as required by this section;

 (3) a requirement that each school district report to the State Department of Education:

 (a) the number of students who completed and submitted the application pursuant to subsection (A); and

 (b) the number of students who received an exception pursuant to subsection (B); and

 (4) means for ensuring compliance with federal law regarding confidentiality of student educational information, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. Section 1232g, and any law of this State relating to the privacy of student information.

 (F) The superintendent shall establish an advisory committee to assist the State Board in adopting rules under subsection (E) to implement this section and to develop recommendations for that purpose. The advisory committee must be composed of:

 (1) school counselors;

 (2) school administrators; and

 (3) stakeholders to represent the needs of interested students.

B. This SECTION is applicable beginning with the 2026‑2027 School Year.

SECTION 4. Section 59‑26‑35 of the S.C. Code is amended to read:

 Section 59‑26‑35. (A) The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education shall transfer the hosting and operation of the “South Carolina Educator Preparation Report Card” to the State Department of Education. The department, with the assistance of the Department of Educationcommission, State Board of Education, the Center for Research on Teacher Education (SC‑TEACHER), and the Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office, shall form a commission to conduct a detailed assessment of the current data infrastructure, develop metrics, determine weightings, construct a unified data upload system, and construct public and private facing data reports including, but not limited to, annually publishing before November first an online report card known as the “South Carolina Educator Preparation Report Card”. The report card must be made available on the State Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education’s websites. The commissiondepartment shall develop a format that each educator preparation program must use on its website that shows all required information regarding its respective program. The report card shall evaluate the ability of educator preparation programs, including alternative programs, to prepare new teachers for success in South Carolina’s classrooms, as well as describe the school and district contexts in which completers work. The report card must include data on a variety of measures to provide an overall picture of how well each educator preparation program prepares effective educators and meets state goals including, but not limited to, the following:

 (1) number of undergraduate and graduate completers;

 (2) placement and one, three, and five- year retention rates by districts and regions of the State;

 (3) performance‑based assessments of candidates;

 (4) ability of program to recruit a strong, diverse cohort of candidates and prepare them to teach in the content areas of greatest need;

 (5) quality of clinical experiences, including access to qualified and trained mentors, time in the field, and opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in the clinical setting;

 (6) effectiveness of individuals who completed a provider’s program and are employed in a public school classroom. The information must be differentiated by provider and, where applicable, across content areas; and

 (7) graduate and employer satisfaction.

 (B) Under consultation with the commissiondepartment, SC‑TEACHER shall develop metrics and instrumentation to evaluate the working conditions of educators, extent and quality of mentoring available to new educators, and universal graduate and employer satisfaction surveys.

 (C) The State Department of Education, each educator preparation program, and each school district shall report all data to SC‑TEACHER as requested by the State Board of Education to complete the evaluation.

SECTION 5. Chapter 1, Title 41 of the S.C. Code is amended by adding:

 Section 41‑1‑140. Beginning July 1, 2026, the Department of Employment and Workforce shall maintain and provide online access to information regarding the economic value of college majors. In addition to showing the economic value of each college major offered in this State, the department also shall compare bachelor’s degree earned to job availability. The information must be available at no cost to the public. The availability of the information must be communicated to the State Department of Education and each public school district in the State. The department may expand its report to include associate degrees, master’s degrees, and doctoral degrees.

SECTION 6. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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