

The House Committee on Education offers the following substitute to HB 855:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

To amend Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to educational programs, so as to direct the State Board of Education to adopt rules, regulations, and protocols for the immediate and deliberate assessment of whether exposure to trauma has adversely impacted a foster care student's educational performance; to require the Department of Education to provide guidance to local school systems; to require local school systems to immediately and deliberately assess newly enrolled foster care students; to provide for legislative findings; to provide for definitions; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Part 3 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to educational programs, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

"20-2-152.2.

(a) The General Assembly finds that foster care students are particularly vulnerable to exposure to traumatic events and situations. The General Assembly also finds that a foster care student's exposure to trauma can be exacerbated by changing schools, particularly when the student may be eligible for special education and related services. Therefore, it is the intent of the General Assembly that a protocol be developed for use by each school that receives state funds under this article to immediately and deliberately assess foster care students upon their enrollment at a new school and determine whether exposure to trauma has had or is likely to have an adverse impact on the foster care student's educational performance, including both academics and classroom behavior.

(b) As used in this Code section, the term:

(1) 'Foster care student' means a student who is placed in a foster family home, child care institution, or another substitute care setting approved by the Department of Human Services.

(2) 'Trauma' means exposure of a foster care student, as a witness or direct participant, to one or more traumatic events or traumatic situations.

(c) No later than January 1, 2021, the State Board of Education shall adopt any rules, regulations, and protocols necessary for use by public school personnel to immediately and deliberately assess whether exposure to trauma has had or is likely to have an adverse impact on the foster care student's educational performance, including both academics and classroom behavior. Such rules, regulations, and protocols shall also provide that the impact of trauma shall be considered at the appropriate time among the relevant criteria considered by school personnel to determine the eligibility of foster care students for special education and related services as provided for in Code Section 20-2-152. Further, the Department of Education shall provide guidance to local school systems regarding trauma, the impacts of trauma on students, including, but not limited to, foster care students, and procedures for the immediate and deliberate assessment of newly enrolled foster care students.

(d) Upon the enrollment of a foster care student, a local school system shall immediately and deliberately assess whether exposure to trauma has had or is likely to have an adverse impact on the foster care student's educational performance, including both academics and classroom behavior. The local school system's assessment shall be part of its overall determination of whether the initial evaluation process for determining eligibility for special education and related services should be commenced for such foster care student."

SECTION 2.

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.