

House Bill 541

By: Representatives Dempsey of the 13<sup>th</sup>, Cooper of the 45<sup>th</sup>, Taylor of the 173<sup>rd</sup>, Prince of the 132<sup>nd</sup>, and Hawkins of the 27<sup>th</sup>

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To amend Code Section 20-3-411 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to  
2 definitions regarding tuition equalization grants at private colleges and universities, so as to  
3 expand the definition of an approved school to include certain institutions which offer  
4 programs in nursing; to provide for related matters; to provide for legislative intent; to repeal  
5 conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

7 **SECTION 1.**

8 WHEREAS, the General Assembly is committed to addressing the healthcare workforce  
9 shortage in Georgia, which includes having a sufficient number of high-quality nurses; and

10 WHEREAS, to increase the number of high-quality nurses in Georgia, crucial elements  
11 include providing financial assistance and removing impediments to practicing nursing.

**SECTION 2.**

12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38

Code Section 20-3-411 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to definitions regarding tuition equalization grants at private colleges and universities, is amended by revising paragraph (2) as follows:

"(2) 'Approved school' means:

(A) A nonproprietary institution of higher education located in this state which is not a branch of the university system; which is not a four-year or graduate level institution of higher education that is, or is a part of, a college or university system that is owned and operated by a state other than Georgia; which is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; which is not a graduate level school or college of theology or divinity; and which is not presently receiving state funds under Article 4 of this chapter; provided, however, that an institution which otherwise meets the requirements of this definition and of this subpart except for the lack of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools shall be deemed to be an 'approved school' during the period that the institution holds candidate for accreditation status with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; provided, further, that an institution which otherwise meets the requirements of this definition and of this subpart except for the lack of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools shall be deemed to be an 'approved school' if such institution was previously an 'approved school' under division ~~(iii)~~ (iv) of subparagraph (B) of this paragraph within the last five years; provided, further, that an institution which was previously accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools within the last seven years and which otherwise meets the requirements of this definition and of this subpart except for the lack of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools shall be deemed to be an 'approved school'; and

(B)(i) A qualified proprietary institution of higher education located in this state which is a baccalaureate degree-granting institution of higher education; which is

39 accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; which is not a Bible  
40 school or college (or, at the graduate level, a school or college of theology or  
41 divinity); which admits as regular students only persons who have a high school  
42 diploma, a state approved high school equivalency (HSE) diploma, or a degree from  
43 an accredited postsecondary institution; whose students are eligible to participate in  
44 the federal Pell Grant program; which has been reviewed and approved for operation  
45 and for receipt of tuition equalization grant funds by the Georgia Nonpublic  
46 Postsecondary Education Commission; which is domiciled and incorporated in the  
47 State of Georgia; which has been in existence in the State of Georgia for at least ten  
48 years; and which met all of the requirements of this subparagraph by January 1, 2011;  
49 provided, however, that the criteria for approval for receipt of tuition equalization  
50 grant funds shall include but not be limited to areas of course study, quality of  
51 instruction, student placement rate, research and library sources, faculty, support staff,  
52 financial resources, physical plant facilities resources, and support and equipment  
53 resources.

54 (ii) A qualified proprietary institution of higher education located in this state which  
55 is a baccalaureate degree-granting institution offering a baccalaureate degree program  
56 or programs in nursing; which is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges  
57 and Schools or by the Higher Learning Commission; which is accredited by the  
58 Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education; which has a National Council  
59 Licensure Examination four-year average passage rate of at least 80 percent; which  
60 is not a Bible school or college (or, at the graduate level, a school or college of  
61 theology or divinity); which admits as regular students only persons who have a high  
62 school diploma, a state approved high school equivalency (HSE) diploma, or a degree  
63 from an accredited postsecondary institution; whose students are eligible to participate  
64 in the federal Pell Grant program; which has been reviewed and approved for  
65 operation and for receipt of tuition equalization grant funds by the Georgia Nonpublic

66 Postsecondary Education Commission; which has at least one instructional campus  
67 that has been physically located in the State of Georgia for at least ten years, as of  
68 June 30, 2025; provided, however, that only such institution's baccalaureate degree  
69 program or programs in nursing shall be deemed an approved school for the purposes  
70 of this subpart; and provided, further, that an institution or program that is deemed an  
71 approved school pursuant to this division shall not be deemed an eligible  
72 postsecondary institution as defined in Code Section 20-3-519 or for any purposes  
73 provided for in Part 7 of this article, relating to HOPE scholarships and grants.

74 (ii)(iii) Any proprietary institution that is otherwise qualified pursuant to division (i)  
75 of this subparagraph on July 1, 1995, shall be deemed to be eligible for receipt of  
76 tuition equalization grant funds subject, however, to any subsequent review of such  
77 approval pursuant to any proper regulations which may thereafter be adopted in  
78 accordance with paragraph (10) of subsection (b) of Code Section 20-3-250.5  
79 applicable to all qualified proprietary institutions.

80 (iii)(iv) Any proprietary institution of higher education that is otherwise qualified  
81 pursuant to division (i) of this subparagraph on January 1, 2011, shall continue to be  
82 an approved school pursuant to this paragraph as long as it continues to meet the  
83 requirements of division (i) of this subparagraph as such existed on March 14, 2011."

84 **SECTION 3.**

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