

House Bill 558

By: Representatives Gaines of the 120th, Dempsey of the 13th, and Newton of the 127th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 4 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 vocational, technical, and adult education, so as to authorize the State Board of the Technical
3 College System of Georgia to establish the adult workforce high school diploma program;
4 to provide for the selection of third-party providers to administer the program; to provide
5 requirements for approved program providers; to provide for disbursement of funds to
6 approved program providers; to provide for reporting; to provide for definitions; to provide
7 for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

9 **SECTION 1.**

10 Chapter 4 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to vocational,
11 technical, and adult education, is amended by adding a new article to read as follows:

12

13 "ARTICLE 9

14 20-4-170.

15 As used in this article, the term:

H. B. 558

- 1 -

- 16 (1) 'Academic skill intake assessment' means a criterion referenced assessment of
17 numeracy and literacy skill with high reliability and validity as determined by third-party
18 research, which assessment may be administered in person or online.
- 19 (2) 'Adult workforce high school diploma program' and 'program' mean the program
20 provided for in this article.
- 21 (3) 'Approved program provider' means a third-party entity that applies to participate in
22 the program, is approved by the state board, and agrees to meet all program requirements.
- 23 (4) 'Average cost per graduate' means the average cost per graduate calculated in
24 accordance with Code Section 20-4-172.
- 25 (5) 'Cohort' means all students who enter the program between July 1 and June 30 of
26 each program year.
- 27 (6) 'Eligible student' means an individual who:
- 28 (A) Resides in this state;
29 (B) Is between 21 and 40 years of age at the time of enrollment;
30 (C) Has not attained a high school diploma;
31 (D) Does not meet any of the ineligibility criteria provided for in subsection (b) of
32 Code Section 20-3-519.1; and
33 (E) Has previously been enrolled in a public primary or secondary school or adult
34 education program in this state.
- 35 (7) 'Employability skills certification' means a certificate earned by demonstrating
36 professional nontechnical skills through assessment and includes, but is not limited to,
37 the program standards of the United States Department of Labor's 'Skills to Pay the Bills:
38 Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success' program.
- 39 (8) 'Graduation rate' means the graduation rate calculated in accordance with Code
40 Section 20-4-172.

41 (9) 'Industry recognized credential' means an education related credential or work related
42 credential that verifies an individual's qualification or competence and is issued by an
43 entity with the authority to issue such credential.

44 (10) 'Measurement period' means the two-year period beginning July 1 of the year the
45 cohort begins through June 30 of the subsequent fiscal year.

46 (11) 'Milestones' means measures of student progress for which funds are disbursed to
47 approved program providers pursuant to Code Section 20-4-173.

48 (12) 'Program funding' means funding received by an approved program provider
49 pursuant to Code Section 20-4-173.

50 (13) 'Program year' means the period beginning on July 1 of each year and ending on
51 June 30 of the immediately following year.

52 (14) 'Stackable credential' means a credential that is part of a sequence of credentials that
53 can be accumulated over time to build up an individual's qualifications to advance along
54 a career pathway.

55 (15) 'State board' means the State Board of the Technical College System of Georgia.

56 (16) 'Transcript evaluation' means a documented summary of credits earned in previous
57 public or private accredited high schools compared with this state's requirements to earn
58 a high school diploma.

59 (17) 'Workforce credential' means an industry recognized credential or a stackable
60 credential.

61 20-4-171.

62 (a) The state board shall be authorized to establish the adult workforce high school
63 diploma program to allow eligible students to qualify for enrollment in the program, and
64 upon successful completion of the program, to be awarded a high school diploma.

65 (b) The state board shall be authorized to approve program providers to administer the
66 program. Such approved program providers shall be selected through an application
67 process, which application process shall be as follows:

68 (1) Not later than August 15 of each year, the state board shall make available an
69 application for third-party entities to apply to become approved program providers;

70 (2) Not later than September 15 of each year, the state board shall review applications,
71 approve program providers that meet the requirements set forth in this article, and make
72 available a list of approved program providers on the state board's public website; and

73 (3) Approved program providers shall be authorized to begin enrolling eligible students
74 upon being approved by the state board as an approved program provider.

75 (c) To implement the program, notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary,
76 the state board shall be authorized to waive or provide variances to state rules, regulations,
77 policies, and procedures and to seek waivers or variances of federal laws, rules, regulations,
78 policies, and procedures that may be reasonably necessary to meet the goals of the
79 program.

80 (d) The state board shall be authorized to promulgate rules and regulations necessary to
81 implement the provisions of this article.

82 20-4-172.

83 (a) Approved program providers shall:

84 (1) Be accredited by:

85 (A) Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges;

86 (B) New England Association of Colleges and Schools;

87 (C) Middle States Commission on Higher Education;

88 (D) Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and
89 Colleges;

90 (E) Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities;

- 91 (F) Georgia Accrediting Commission;
92 (G) Higher Learning Commission;
93 (H) Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges;
94 (I) Cogna; or
95 (J) A successor entity or consolidation of any of the above entities;
96 (2) Offer the following to eligible students at no cost to such students:
97 (A) Academic skill intake assessments and transcript evaluations for eligible students;
98 (B) A documented plan for each eligible student that shall include the requirements for
99 such student to complete the program and earn a high school diploma;
100 (C) Remedial education services in numeracy and literacy;
101 (D) A course catalog that includes all courses necessary to earn a high school diploma;
102 (E) One or more programs through which eligible students can earn a workforce
103 credential;
104 (F) One or more programs through which eligible students can earn an employability
105 skills certification;
106 (G) One or more courses that help eligible students enter or advance within a specific
107 occupation or occupational cluster; and
108 (H) All courses necessary to meet the requirements to earn a high school diploma;
109 (3) Have a graduation rate of not less than 50 percent; and
110 (4) Have an average cost per graduate of not more than \$7,500.00.
111 (b) If an approved program provider fails to meet the standards set forth in paragraphs (3)
112 and (4) of subsection (a) of this Code section, the state board shall place such approved
113 program provider on probationary status for the remainder of the program year. If an
114 approved program provider fails to meet such standards by the end of the subsequent
115 program year, such approved program provider shall no longer be an approved program
116 provider.

117 (c)(1) Average cost per graduate shall be calculated by dividing the total program
118 funding disbursed to an approved program provider for a cohort during the time period
119 from the beginning of the cohort through the end of the measurement period by the total
120 number of students in that cohort who earned a high school diploma during the
121 measurement period.

122 (2) Graduation rate shall be calculated by dividing the number of students in a cohort
123 who earned a high school diploma during the measurement period by the number of
124 students in such cohort for which such approved program provider has received program
125 funding.

126 20-4-173.

127 (a)(1) Subject to appropriations specifically for the purpose of the program, the state
128 board shall be authorized to disburse funds appropriated by the General Assembly for the
129 implementation of the program to approved program providers for the following
130 milestones reached by students in amounts not to exceed:

131 (A) For the completion of each half unit of high school credit when such credit is
132 required to earn a high school diploma, \$275.00;

133 (B) For each employability skills certification earned by a student, \$275.00;

134 (C) For each workforce credential earned by a student when such credential requires
135 not more than 50 hours of training, \$275.00;

136 (D) For each workforce credential earned by a student when such credential requires
137 more than 50 but not more than 100 hours of training, \$550.00;

138 (E) For each workforce credential earned by a student when such credential requires
139 more than 100 hours of training, \$825.00; or

140 (F) For each high school diploma earned by a student, \$1,100.00.

141 (2) Funds shall be disbursed pursuant to this subsection to approved program providers
142 in the order in which the reports required by subsection (b) of this Code section are
143 received by the state board.

144 (3) No later than the last day of each month, the state board shall notify approved
145 program providers of the total amount of funds disbursed to approved program providers
146 and the amount of funds remaining for the program for the fiscal year.

147 (b) In order to receive the funds provided for in subsection (a) of this Code section,
148 approved program providers shall, no later than the tenth day of each month, submit to the
149 state board a report which shall include all milestones met by students in the previous
150 month.

151 (c) Funds received by approved program providers pursuant to this Code section shall be
152 used for providing and preparing for instruction, instructional materials, and support
153 services for students, including coaching and mentoring. Such funds shall not be used to
154 build or expand brick-and-mortar infrastructure.

155 20-4-174.

156 (a) Beginning in 2027, no later than August 15 of each year, each approved program
157 provider shall submit a report to the state board which shall include:

158 (1) The number of eligible students participating in the program;

159 (2) The number of units of high school credit earned by such students;

160 (3) The number of employability skills certificates earned by such students;

161 (4) The number of workforce credentials earned by such students; and

162 (5) The number of students who earned a high school diploma through participation in
163 the program.

164 (b) Beginning in 2027, no later than December 1 of each year, the state board shall provide
165 the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and
166 the chairpersons of the House Committee on Education, the Senate Education and Youth

167 Committee, the House Committee on Higher Education, and the Senate Higher Education
168 Committee with a report that includes:
169 (1) The information reported to the state board pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code
170 section;
171 (2) The amount of funds disbursed to each approved program provider and the
172 milestones for which such funding was disbursed;
173 (3) The graduation rate for each approved program provider; and
174 (4) The average cost per graduate for each approved program provider."

175 **SECTION 2.**

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