

House Bill 694

By: Representatives Lupton of the 83rd, Lim of the 98th, and Wilkerson of the 38th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 14 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to elementary and secondary education grants, so as to provide for the State Board
3 of Education to establish a five-year school pilot program to increase the availability of
4 effective school counseling and postsecondary preparation services in secondary schools to
5 increase high school graduation rates and the percentage of students who continue into
6 postsecondary education; to provide for eligibility; to provide for grant funds for local
7 education agencies to increase the availability of effective school counseling at public
8 secondary schools; to provide for applications and selection to participate in the pilot
9 program; to provide for assessment and reporting on the impacts of the pilot program; to
10 authorize the State Board of Education to promulgate rules and regulations necessary to
11 implement the pilot program; to provide for waivers and variances of state rules, regulations,
12 policies, and procedures if necessary; to provide for automatic repeal; to provide for related
13 matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

14 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

H. B. 694

- 1 -

SECTION 1.

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Article 14 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to elementary and secondary education grants, is amended by revising Code Section 20-2-640, which is reserved, as follows:

"20-2-640.

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

(1) 'Local education agency' shall have the same meaning as provided for in Code Section 20-2-167.1.

(2) 'Local governing body' means the local board of education, governing board, or other legal entity responsible for the governance and oversight of a local education agency.

(3) 'Participating school' means a public secondary school identified by the State Board of Education or local governing body as participating in the pilot program.

(4) 'Postsecondary institution' shall have the same meaning as 'eligible postsecondary institution' as defined in Code Section 20-3-519.

(5) 'School counselor' means an individual who holds a service certificate in School Counseling P-12 issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

(b) The State Board of Education shall establish a pilot program to provide funding to eligible local education agencies to increase the availability of effective school counseling and postsecondary preparation services in secondary schools with the goal of increasing the graduation rate within the state and increasing the percentage of students who appropriately prepare for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education.

(c) Subject to appropriations by the General Assembly, the pilot program shall include funding for up to \$3 million each school year, for up to five school years, beginning with the 2027-2028 school year, to eligible local education agencies selected by the State Board of Education to participate in the pilot program.

(d) To be eligible to participate in the pilot program, a local education agency shall submit an application to participate in the pilot program, which application shall include:

- 42 (1) A list of the participating school or schools within the local education agency and the
43 current number of school counselors and ratio of counselors to students at each
44 participating school;
- 45 (2) Whether the local education agency has entered into, or has committed to
46 establishing, one or more partnerships with postsecondary institutions to support and
47 increase the capacity and effectiveness of the counseling and postsecondary preparation
48 services provided to secondary school students enrolled in or receiving such services
49 from participating schools;
- 50 (3) Whether the local education agency has entered into, or has committed to
51 establishing, one or more partnerships with community organizations and with nonprofit
52 organizations, including, but not limited to, those that provide wraparound student
53 supports and dropout prevention services;
- 54 (4) A description of the local education agency or participating school's existing early
55 warning system or plans to develop an early warning system to identify students who may
56 be at risk of dropping out or who may be off-track for graduation;
- 57 (5) The local education agency's plan for use of the grant money, including the extent to
58 which the grant money will be used to increase the number of school counselors at
59 participating schools and to provide professional development for school counselors or
60 other faculty members to provide postsecondary preparation services at participating
61 schools;
- 62 (6) The local education agency's use of needs assessments that identify challenging
63 issues within the local education agency or participating schools in terms of student
64 learning and success;
- 65 (7) Identification of any programs or services provided by the local education agency or
66 participating schools that have helped to increase graduation rates and the level of
67 postsecondary success;

68 (8) The attendance, grade-retention and promotion, and grading policies implemented
69 by the local education agency or participating schools;

70 (9) Whether the local education agency intends to provide matching funds to augment
71 any grant moneys received from the program and the anticipated amount and source of
72 any matching funds; and

73 (10) The local education agency's plan for continuing to fund the increases in school
74 counseling services and postsecondary preparation services following the expiration of
75 the grant.

76 (e)(1) The State Board of Education shall establish requirements and criteria for selecting
77 eligible local education agencies to participate in the pilot program in accordance with
78 the provisions of this Code section.

79 (2) When selecting participants for the pilot program, the State Board of Education shall
80 give priority to local education agencies that identify participating schools with dropout
81 rates or percentages of students eligible for free and reduced price school meals that
82 exceed the state-wide average.

83 (f) The State Board of Education shall establish reporting requirements for the local
84 education agencies participating in the pilot program. Such reporting requirements shall
85 include:

86 (1) The number of school counselors hired using grant moneys from the pilot program;

87 (2) Any professional development programs provided using grant moneys from the pilot
88 program;

89 (3) Any other services provided using grant moneys from the pilot program;

90 (4) Dropout rates and graduation rates, as defined by the department, for each
91 participating school for the years of the pilot program and the five years preceding the
92 school's participation in the pilot program;

93 (5) The percentage of graduates enrolled in a postsecondary institution, the percentage
94 of graduates who are working and not enrolled in a postsecondary institution, and the

- 95 percentage of graduates who enlist in the armed forces for each participating school for
96 the years of the pilot program and the five years preceding the school's participation in
97 the pilot program;
- 98 (6) Information on the level of postsecondary preparation services provided to students
99 at participating schools and a description of such services; and
- 100 (7) Any additional information the State Board of Education, by rule, may require.
- 101 (g) To implement the pilot program, notwithstanding any other provision of law to the
102 contrary, the State Board of Education shall be authorized to waive or provide variances
103 to state rules, regulations, policies, and procedures and to provisions of this chapter that
104 may be reasonably necessary to meet the goals of the pilot program.
- 105 (h) The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to carry
106 out the provisions of this Code section.
- 107 (i)(1) By January 1, 2026, the Department of Education shall develop an application
108 process and seek applications from local education agencies for the pilot program to be
109 submitted no later than November 1, 2026.
- 110 (2)(A) The Department of Education shall monitor and annually assess the status of the
111 pilot program with cooperation and input from local education agencies participating
112 in the pilot program.
- 113 (B) Beginning no later than October 1, 2028, and by October 1 of each year thereafter,
114 the Department of Education shall provide to the State Board of Education a report of
115 the annual assessment provided for in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph.
- 116 (j) This Code section shall stand repealed in its entirety on July 1, 2033. Reserved."

117 **SECTION 2.**

118 This Act shall become effective on July 1, 2025.

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SECTION 3.

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