

House Bill 313

By: Representatives Stephens of the 164th, Smith of the 138th, Hugley of the 141st, Dickey of the 145th, Jackson of the 165th, and others

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 provide for a pilot program whereby
3 qualifying private nonprofit entities provide instruction and other services for eligible
4 students 21 years of age and older to attain a high school diploma; to provide for program
5 requirements; to provide for waivers and variances; to provide for definitions; to provide for
6 rules and regulations; to provide for automatic repeal; to provide for an annual report; to
7 provide for a short title; to provide for legislative findings and intent; to provide for related
8 matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

10 **SECTION 1.**

11 This Act shall be known and may be cited as the "Workforce EXCEleration Act."

12 **SECTION 2.**

13 (a) The General Assembly finds that:

14 (1) The Georgia Department of Economic Development works to expand Georgia's role
15 as an economic hub for business;

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- 16 (2) Over 37,500 new jobs in Georgia have been recently created as a result of the largest
17 economic development projects in the history of the state, and more than 85 percent of
18 those new jobs will be created outside of the metro Atlanta area. Nevertheless, the General
19 Assembly finds that more than one million Georgians currently lack a high school diploma;
- 20 (3) It is imperative to develop a skilled workforce to meet current and future needs across
21 the industry spectrum, and creative programs are necessary to empower these Georgians
22 to gain the education and skills necessary to fill these positions; and
- 23 (4) High school diploma programs for adult learners have proven successful in other states
24 at providing the support services necessary for persons who lack the skills or credentials
25 required to participate in higher educational opportunities or workforce development
26 programs offered by technical college systems, and public-private partnerships can
27 effectively leverage limited state resources to help meet our workforce needs.
- 28 (b) It is the intent of the Georgia General Assembly that by empowering Georgians to obtain
29 their high school diplomas and obtain industry recognized certifications, they can excel in
30 the workforce and improve the life trajectory for themselves and their families.

31 **SECTION 3.**

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

34 "ARTICLE 8

35 20-4-160.

36 (a) As used in this article, the term:

37 (1) 'Eligible student' means a student who is eligible to participate in the program.

38 (2) 'High School Diploma Program for Adult Learners' and 'program' mean the program
39 provided for in this article.

- 40 (3) 'State board' means the State Board of the Technical College System of Georgia.
- 41 (b)(1) The state board is authorized to establish a pilot program to allow eligible students
- 42 to qualify for enrollment in the High School Diploma Program for Adult Learners
- 43 facilitated by participating units of the Technical College System of Georgia and, upon
- 44 successful completion of the program, to be awarded a high school diploma. The purpose
- 45 of the pilot program is to assess the feasibility of implementing a state-funded program
- 46 for individuals residing in this state who are 21 years of age or older and who have not
- 47 attained a high school diploma to enroll and participate in a program facilitated by a unit
- 48 of the Technical College System of Georgia and provided by qualifying private nonprofit
- 49 entities which, upon successful completion, allows eligible students to earn a high school
- 50 diploma.
- 51 (2) To implement the pilot program, notwithstanding any other provision of law to the
- 52 contrary, the state board and the State Board of Education shall be authorized to waive
- 53 or provide variances to state laws, rules, regulations, policies, and procedures and to
- 54 provisions of this title that may be reasonably necessary to meet the goals of the pilot
- 55 program. Additionally, the state board and the State Board of Education shall be
- 56 authorized to seek waivers or variances of federal laws, rules, regulations, policies, and
- 57 procedures that may be reasonably necessary to meet the goals of the pilot program.
- 58 Such waivers or variances shall automatically expire at the end of the pilot program
- 59 unless an earlier expiration is provided for.
- 60 (3) The pilot program shall include no more than three program locations in the state and
- 61 shall stand automatically repealed on June 30, 2029.
- 62 (4)(A) The state board is authorized to provide funds appropriated by the General
- 63 Assembly for the implementation of the pilot program to private nonprofit entities
- 64 which agree to meet all program requirements and to provide the following to eligible
- 65 students at no cost to such students:

66 (i) Instruction and related services provided by highly qualified teachers certificated
67 by the Professional Standards Commission;

68 (ii) An instructional program which utilizes evidence based curricula and
69 instructional strategies for adult learners; and

70 (iii) Dedicated program facilities which shall meet minimum requirements
71 established by state law or state board policy and which shall include on-site career
72 and academic counseling services, child care services, and transportation assistance
73 programs.

74 (B) The state board is authorized to withhold up to 2 percent of the funds provided for
75 in subparagraph (A) of this paragraph for use in administering the duties required
76 pursuant to this article; provided, however, that any amount withheld pursuant to this
77 subparagraph shall be spent solely and directly on expenses incurred by the Technical
78 College System of Georgia in performing the duties required by this article.

79 (5) The state board shall review the results of the pilot program and shall, no later than
80 February 1 of each year during the program, provide the General Assembly with a
81 comprehensive report with any recommendations for its continued use and any needed
82 changes in such program. Such report shall include a comprehensive list of any such
83 waivers or variances requested as provided for in paragraph (2) of this subsection, a
84 statement of necessity for each request, and whether each request was granted in whole
85 or in part.

86 (c)(1) To be an eligible student, an individual shall:

87 (A) Reside in this state;

88 (B) Be 21 years of age or older; and

89 (C) Have not attained a high school diploma.

90 (2) The pilot program established by the state board pursuant to this article shall provide
91 for the award of a high school diploma to any eligible student who successfully completes
92 the program.

- 93 (d) The state board shall determine the specific competencies concerning the skills and
94 knowledge needed for completion of each component of the program; provided, however,
95 that the state board shall make such determination regarding the skills and knowledge
96 needed to meet the requirements for a high school diploma as provided for in this article
97 in consultation with the State Board of Education and the Department of Education.
- 98 (e) To be eligible to participate in the program, a student shall reside in this state and shall
99 not have attained a high school diploma.
- 100 (f) The state board shall award a high school diploma to any eligible student enrolled in
101 the program provided for in this article who completes all requirements of the program,
102 including the rigorous coursework required and facilitated by a participating unit of the
103 Technical College System of Georgia and provided by participating private nonprofit
104 entities.
- 105 (g) The state board, in consultation with the State Board of Education, shall establish rules
106 and regulations to implement the provisions of this article."

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SECTION 4.

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