

Senate Bill 112

By: Senators Anavitarte of the 31st, Robertson of the 29th, Payne of the 54th, Gooch of the 51st, Hickman of the 4th and others

**AS PASSED SENATE**

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;

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 in a separate program area for this purpose for the implementation of the  
64 pilot program to private nonprofit entities which agree to meet all program  
65 requirements and to provide the following to eligible students at no cost to such  
66 students:

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

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

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

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

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

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

88 (A) Reside in this state;

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

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

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

94 (d) The state board shall determine the specific competencies concerning the skills and  
95 knowledge needed for completion of each component of the program; provided, however,  
96 that the state board shall make such determination regarding the skills and knowledge  
97 needed to meet the requirements for a high school diploma as provided for in this article  
98 in consultation with the State Board of Education and the Department of Education.

99 (e) To be eligible to participate in the program, a student shall reside in this state and shall  
100 not have attained a high school diploma.

101 (f) The state board shall award a high school diploma to any eligible student enrolled in  
102 the program provided for in this article who completes all requirements of the program,  
103 including the rigorous coursework required and facilitated by a participating unit of the  
104 Technical College System of Georgia and provided by participating private nonprofit  
105 entities.

106 (g) The state board, in consultation with the State Board of Education, shall establish rules  
107 and regulations to implement the provisions of this article."

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#### **SECTION 4.**

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