

Senate Bill 193

By: Senators Brass of the 6th, Hatchett of the 50th, Harbison of the 15th, Albers of the 56th,
Beach of the 21st and others

AS PASSED

**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 automatic repeal; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other
8 purposes.

9 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:**

10 **SECTION 1.**

11 Chapter 4 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to vocational,
12 technical, and adult education, is amended by adding a new article to read as follows:
13

14 "ARTICLE 9

15 20-4-170.

16 As used in this article, the term:

17 (1) 'Academic skill intake assessment' means a criterion referenced assessment of
18 numeracy and literacy skill with high reliability and validity as determined by third-party
19 research, which assessment may be administered in person or online.

20 (2) 'Adult workforce high school diploma program' and 'program' mean the program
21 provided for in this article.

22 (3) 'Approved program provider' means a third-party entity that applies to participate in
23 the program, is approved by the state board, and agrees to meet all program requirements.

24 (4) 'Average cost per graduate' means the average cost per graduate calculated in
25 accordance with Code Section 20-4-172.

26 (5) 'Cohort' means all students who enter the program between July 1 and June 30 of
27 each program year.

28 (6) 'Eligible student' means an individual who:

29 (A) Resides in this state;

30 (B) Is between 21 and 40 years of age at the time of enrollment;

31 (C) Has not attained a high school diploma;

32 (D) Does not meet any of the ineligibility criteria provided for in subsection (b) of
33 Code Section 20-3-519.1; and

34 (E) Has previously been enrolled in a public primary or secondary school or adult
35 education program in this state.

36 (7) 'Employability skills certification' means a certificate earned by demonstrating
37 professional nontechnical skills through assessment and includes, but is not limited to,
38 the program standards of the United States Department of Labor's 'Skills to Pay the Bills:
39 Mastering Soft Skills for Workplace Success' program.

(8) 'Graduation rate' means the graduation rate calculated in accordance with Code Section 20-4-172.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20-4-171.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20-4-172.

(a) Approved program providers shall:

(1) Be accredited by:

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

(B) Georgia Accrediting Commission;

(C) Cognia; or

(D) A successor entity or consolidation of any of the above entities;

(2) Offer the following to eligible students at no cost to such students:

(A) Academic skill intake assessments and transcript evaluations for eligible students;

(B) A documented plan for each eligible student that shall include the requirements for such student to complete the program and earn a high school diploma;

(C) Remedial education services in numeracy and literacy;

(D) A course catalog that includes all courses necessary to earn a high school diploma;

(E) One or more programs through which eligible students can earn a workforce credential;

(F) One or more programs through which eligible students can earn an employability skills certification;

(G) One or more courses that help eligible students enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster; and

(H) All courses necessary to meet the requirements to earn a high school diploma;

(3) Have a graduation rate of not less than 50 percent; and

(4) Have an average cost per graduate of not more than \$7,500.00.

(b) If an approved program provider fails to meet the standards set forth in paragraphs (3) and (4) of subsection (a) of this Code section, the state board shall place such approved program provider on probationary status for the remainder of the program year. If an approved program provider fails to meet such standards by the end of the subsequent program year, such approved program provider shall no longer be an approved program provider.

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

(2) Graduation rate shall be calculated by dividing the number of students in a cohort who earned a high school diploma during the measurement period by the number of

118 students in such cohort for which such approved program provider has received program
119 funding.

120 20-4-173.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

141 (b) In order to receive the funds provided for in subsection (a) of this Code section,
142 approved program providers shall, no later than the tenth day of each month, submit to the

143 state board a report which shall include all milestones met by students in the previous
144 month.

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

149 20-4-174.

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

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

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

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

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

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

158 (b) Beginning in 2027, no later than December 1 of each year, the state board shall provide
159 the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and
160 the chairpersons of the House Committee on Education, the Senate Education and Youth
161 Committee, the House Committee on Higher Education, and the Senate Higher Education
162 Committee with a report that includes:

163 (1) The information reported to the state board pursuant to subsection (a) of this Code
164 section;

165 (2) The amount of funds disbursed to each approved program provider and the
166 milestones for which such funding was disbursed;

167 (3) The graduation rate for each approved program provider; and

168 (4) The average cost per graduate for each approved program provider.

169 20-4-175.

170 This article shall stand repealed on July 1, 2031."

171 **SECTION 2.**

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