

Education

See full summary documents for additional detail

Schools for the Deaf and Blind.

SL 2023-10 (H11)

S.L. 2023-10, as amended by Section 2 of S.L. 2023-106, does the following:

- Creates a board of trustees for each of the schools for the deaf and blind and provides for governance of those schools by the new boards, effective July 1, 2024.
- Establishes an admissions process for the schools for the deaf and blind.
- Creates a transition process for the schools to governance by the new boards of trustees beginning in 2024-2025.

Except as otherwise provided, the act became effective April 3, 2023.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) - Star Rating System Reform.

SL 2023-40 (S291)

Section 1.(a) of S.L. 2023-40 extends the expiration date of Section 2 of S.L. 2021-127 from June 30, 2023, until June 30, 2026. This section pertains to awarding QRIS "education points" to a licensed child care facility toward its star rating. The change extends lowering the criteria from 75% to 50% of lead teachers in the program required to meet the "rated licensed education points".

Section 1.(b) of S.L. 2023-40 extends the expiration date of Section 1 of S.L. 2021-127 from six months after the expiration of Executive Order 116 (February 15, 2023) until June 30, 2024. This section pertains to the Division of Child Development and Early Education, Department of Health and Human Services, resuming Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) assessments that would cause a child care facility to lose a star rating due to a facility's loss and inability to replace similarly qualified educators.

Section 2 of S.L. 2023-40 requires the North Carolina Child Care Commission to complete recommendations for QRIS/Star Rating reform by March 31, 2024, and submit those recommendations to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services before the 2024 legislative session begins. Those recommendations must include accreditation from a national early childhood education accreditation organization as an alternative path to earning a star rating equivalent to the accreditation requirements.

This act became effective June 12, 2023.

American Indians Graduating with Honors Act.

SL 2023-43 (H166)

S.L. 2023-43 requires public schools to allow enrolled members of a State or Federally recognized Indian Tribe, and those eligible to be members, to wear objects of cultural significance at school graduation ceremonies.

This act became effective June 14, 2023

Encourage Public Schools to Make One Hundred Percent Muscadine Grape Juice Available to Students – North Carolina Farm Act of 2023.

SL 2023-63 (S582), Sec. 5

Section 5 of S.L. 2023-63 sets an aspirational goal that muscadine grape juice be available in public schools, community colleges, and universities throughout the State.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on June 23, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on June 27, 2023.

This section became effective June 27, 2023.

Self-Liquidating Projects/Property Transfers.

SL 2023-66 (H364)

S.L. 2023-66 does the following:

- Authorizes constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina (UNC) to finance and acquire or construct certain capital improvement projects reviewed and approved by the Board of Governors of UNC on February 23, 2023. The projects will be financed through revenue bonds, special obligation bonds, and other funds available to the institutions, excluding tuition and appropriations from the General Fund
- Authorizes the transfer of personal property between constituent institutions of UNC with the approval of the President of UNC.

This act became effective June 30, 2023.

School Threat Assessment Teams.

SL 2023-78 (H605)

S.L. 2023-78 does the following:

- Requires threat assessment teams in public school units.
- Requires all public school units to participate in school safety exercises and programs.

- Encourages private schools to participate in school safety exercises and programs.
- Requires local boards of education to establish peer-to-peer support programs.

Except as otherwise provided, this act became effective July 7, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

Child Care Flexibilities.

SL 2023-87 (S722)

S.L. 2023-87 directs the Division of Child Development and Early Education, Department of Health and Human Services, to develop and implement criteria to allow the child development associate credential to satisfy education requirements of the star rating system for child care.

This act became effective October 1, 2023.

UNC Omnibus.

SL 2023-102 (S195)

S.L. 2023-102 makes various changes to the laws concerning The University of North Carolina.

- Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund (Trust Fund) – The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics is added to the list of "special needs institutions" and thereby eligible for grants from the Trust Fund if it can raise funds through private sources and match the grants as directed by the statutes.
- Staggered Terms for North Carolina Teaching Fellows Commission (Commission) Members – The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina (UNC BOG) must make appointments to the Teaching Fellows Commission in even-numbered years and the General Assembly must make its appointments in odd-numbered years with terms expiring June 30. These changes apply to terms beginning July 1, 2023.
- Tuition Grants for North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) – High school graduates of NCSSM and UNCSA can postpone enrollment in a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina (UNC) for one year and still receive a tuition grant if any of the hardships already applicable to continuing eligibility have substantially disrupted or interrupted the student's pursuit of a degree, including: (i) a military service obligation; (ii) serious medical debilitation; (iii) a short term or long-term disability; (iv) other extraordinary hardship. This Part is effective May 1, 2022.
- Institutional Neutrality – The constituent institutions of UNC must remain neutral on political controversies of the day.
- Exemption of Certain Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Exempt Employees of UNC from the State Human Resources Act (Act) – Employees of UNC who are pilots, and all other UNC employees who are exempt from the FLSA are exempt from the Act. The UNC BOG can establish positions that would be exempt from the Act without further review or approval by any other State agency.

- Employees of UNC who are exempt from the FLSA and have attained career status before September 1, 2023, have the option of one of the following:
- Continuing employment with career State employee status as part of the Act if the employee remains in the position the employee occupied on August 31, 2023; or
- Waiving career State employee status and continuing employment as a State employee exempt from the Act.
- Additionally, probationary State employees of UNC who are exempt from the FLSA and were hired before September 1, 2023, have the option of one of the following:
- Continuing employment for the required time period and earning career State employee status; or
- Continuing employment as a State employee exempt from the Act.
- Each affected employee must be provided with a written explanation of the impact of an election to waive or decline career State employee status. The employee's election to waive or decline career State employee status must be acknowledged through the employee's written or electronic signature within 60 days.
- Exemption of Certain Employees of North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University (NC A&T) Designated as County Operations Support Staff from the Act – Employees of NC A&T Cooperative Extension Service who are employed in county operations are exempt from the Act in the same manner as the North Carolina State University (NCSU) Extension Service employees. The Board of Trustees of NC A&T can adopt policies to govern the employment of these employees.

Except as otherwise provided, this act became effective July 14, 2023

Parents' Bill of Rights.

SL 2023-106 (S49)

S.L. 2023-106, as amended by Section 7.81 of S.L. 2023-134, does the following:

- Establishes a Parents' Bill of Rights enumerating certain rights of parents related to the education, health, privacy, and safety of their child.
- Requires public school units to provide parents with information related to parental involvement in schools, legal rights for their child's education, and guides for student achievement.
- Requires public school units to provide notifications on student physical and mental health, require age-appropriate instruction on certain topics in kindergarten – fourth grade, and create remedies for parents to address concerns over implementation of these requirements.
- Requires health care practitioners to obtain written consent from the parent of a minor child before providing treatment.

This act has various effective dates. Please see full summary for more details.

Clarify Requirements of Charter Application and Renewal – Charter School Omnibus.

SL 2023-107 (H219), Sec. 1

Section 1 of S.L. 2023-107 clarifies certain requirements for charter school applications and renewals. When approving, renewing, amending, or terminating charter schools, this section prohibits the State Board of Education (SBE) from considering any alleged impact of the charter school on the local school administrative units (LEAs). Additionally, when considering charter renewals, if a charter school provides services to certain targeted groups, this section requires the SBE to compare the charter school's results for those subgroups with the same subgroups in the LEA, rather than comparing results with all students in the LEA.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on July 21, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on August 16, 2023. This section of the act became effective August 16, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Limit Enrollment Caps to Low-Performing Schools – Charter School Omnibus.

SL 2023-107 (H219), Sec. 2

Section 2 of S.L. 2023-107 revises the requirements related to increasing enrollment at charter schools. This section allows charter schools that are not low-performing to set their enrollment each year, rather than requiring supervision or approval by the State Board of Education (SBE). Charter schools that are low-performing can seek approval from the SBE to grow more than 20%.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on July 21, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on August 16, 2023. This section of the act became effective August 16, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Allow Charter Schools to Admit Out-of-State Students and Foreign Exchange Students – Charter School Omnibus.

SL 2023-107 (H219), Sec. 3

Section 3 of S.L. 2023-107 allows a charter school to enroll out-of-state students who are not domiciliaries of North Carolina if the charter school has not filled its enrollment capacity. The charter school must charge the out-of-state students a tuition amount of at least 50% of the total of the per pupil allocation of the local appropriation for the county in which the charter school is located and the per pupil State appropriation for that school year, but no more than 100% of the total of the per pupil allocation of the local appropriation for the county in which the charter school is located and the per pupil State appropriation for that school year. The number of out-of-state students cannot exceed 10% of the total number of students enrolled in the charter school.

Additionally, this section allows charter schools to enroll foreign exchange students in grades 9-12 as follows:

- No more than 2 foreign exchange students per grade in high school (grades 9-12) can be enrolled in any given school year at the charter school.
- The charter school can charge the foreign exchange students a tuition amount of at least 50% of the total of the per pupil allocation of the local appropriation for the county in which the charter school is located and the per pupil State appropriation for that school year, but no more than 100% of the total of the per pupil allocation of the local appropriation for the county in which the charter school is located and the per pupil State appropriation for that school year.
- Foreign exchange students do not count towards the enrollment capacity or cap for any program, class, building or grade levels for grades 9-12 and are not subject to any lottery process used by the charter school for enrollment purposes.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on July 21, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on August 16, 2023. This section of the act became effective August 16, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

Add Admissions Preferences for Graduates of Certain Pre-K Programs and for Children of Military Families – Charter School Omnibus.

SL 2023-107 (H219), Sec. 4

Section 4 of S.L. 2023-107 allows the following students to receive priority admission to charter schools rather than being subject to an admissions lottery:

- Capped at up to 10% of total student enrollment, a preschool student enrolled at least 75 days of the prior semester in a preschool program with a written enrollment articulation agreement with the charter school.
- A student whose parent is on active military duty.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on July 21, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on August 16, 2023. This section of the act became effective August 16, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Prohibit Discrimination of Charter School Students – Charter School Omnibus.

SL 2023-107 (H219), Sec. 5

Section 5 of S.L. 2023-107 prohibits local boards of education from discriminating against charter school students in applying for admission to any school or special program operated in the local school administrative unit.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on July 21, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on August 16, 2023. This section of the act became effective August 16, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Authorize Counties to Provide Capital Funds to Charter Schools – Charter School Omnibus.

SL 2023-107 (H219), Sec. 6

Section 6 of S.L. 2023-107 allows counties to use property taxes to provide direct appropriations for capital funds to charter schools that can be used for real property, building construction and renovation, and furnishings and equipment. Counties receive a security interest if charters used the funds to acquire or improve property, which the county can subordinate to other liens, and release if the charter paid back the capital funds provided. Counties can also lease real property to charters. If a charter is dissolved, any assets purchased with county capital funds is deemed the property of the contributing county or counties.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on July 21, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on August 16, 2023. This section of the act became effective August 16, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Allow the Central Park School for Children in Durham County to Conduct a Weighted Admissions Lottery Pilot Program – Charter School Omnibus.

SL 2023-107 (H219), Sec. 7

Section 7 of S.L. 2023-107 allows Central Park School for Children (CPSC) charter school to establish a pilot of up to four years to include additional lottery weighting factors related to admissions for economically disadvantaged students, including walk zones. This pilot does not change the school's charter. The CPSC charter is required to report to the Office of Charter Schools annually during the pilot on the weighted lottery procedures and number of students admitted under those procedures.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on July 21, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on August 16, 2023. This section of the act became effective August 16, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Fairness in Women's Sports Act.

SL 2023-109 (H574)

S.L. 2023-109, as amended by section 18 of S.L. 2023-133 does the following:

- Prohibits male students from playing on middle school, high school, or collegiate athletics teams designated for females, women, or girls.

- Requires a student's sex to be recognized solely based on reproductive biology and genetics at birth for purposes of athletic participation.
- Creates a civil cause of action for students who are harmed as a result of a violation of the requirements, or who are retaliated against for reporting violations.
- Creates a civil cause of action for public school units and institutions of higher education that suffer harm as a result of following the requirements.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on July 5, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on August 16, 2023. This act became effective August 16, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Charter School Review Board.

SL 2023-110 (H618)

S.L. 2023-110 as amended by S.L. 2023-107 and Section 7.84 of S.L. 2023-134 converts the North Carolina Charter Schools Advisory Board (Advisory Board) into the North Carolina Charter Schools Review Board (Review Board) which will approve or deny charter applications, renewals, and revocations independent of the State Board of Education (SBE). It requires the SBE to have the following duties with respect to charter schools:

- Establish all rules for the operation and approval of charter schools following the recommendations of the Review Board.
- Allocate funds to charter schools. The SBE cannot, however, withhold or reduce distribution of funds to a charter school except if one of the following applies:
- The change in funding is due to an annual adjustment based on enrollment or is a general adjustment to allocations that is not specific to the charter or the actions of that charter school.
- The Review Board notifies the SBE that the charter has materially violated a term of its charter, has violated a State statute or federal law, or has had its charter terminated or nonrenewed.
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) notifies the SBE that the charter school has failed to meet generally accepted standards of fiscal management or has violated requirements for receipt of funds.
- Hear appeals from decisions of the Review Board.
- Ensure accountability for the charter school finances and student performance.

The Review Board is prohibited from considering any alleged impact on the local school administrative unit or units in the area served by a charter school when deciding whether to grant, renew, amend, or terminate a charter. Appeals from the Review Board must be heard and decided by the SBE by December 1 of the same year. Applicants, charters schools, or the Superintendent can appeal to the SBE on final decisions made by the Review Board within 10 days of the Review Board's decision. The SBE must review the appealed decision on a de novo basis and the party submitting the appeal can provide any information to the SBE that it considers relevant. The SBE has final decision-making authority on the approval of charter applications, renewals, revocations, and amendments.

The current members of the Advisory Board will serve as initial members of the Review Board. However, upon the expiration of the current term of the Review Board members, two terms expiring in 2025 must be replaced with an appointment to a two-year term of office by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and two terms expiring in 2025 must be replaced with an appointment to a two-year term by the President Pro Tempore of the Senate. As those terms expire in 2027 and thereafter, or as vacancies occur prior to the expiration of those terms, the members of the Review Board will be appointed as provided by statute.

Finally, charter schools that received a decision on an application, charter amendment, renewal, or termination from the SBE after July 1, 2022, that differed from the recommendation of the Advisory Board can apply for reconsideration by the Review Board within 60 days of this act becoming effective and the Review Board must issue a decision on the reconsideration request at its first meeting after receiving the request.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on July 7, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on August 16, 2023. This act became effective August 16, 2023, and the limitations on the SBE to reduce allocation of funds to charter schools became effective July 1, 2023.

Principal Licensure Changes.

SL 2023-125 (H432)

S.L. 2023-125 updates principal licensure requirements and administrator preparation program approval rules that apply beginning July 1, 2024, and requires the Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission (PEPSC) to develop a portfolio-based assessment for prospective principals.

The State Board of Education (SBE) must adopt rules for two classes of administrator license, an administrator license and a provisional assistant principal license, that meet certain requirements. The SBE must also develop rules for determining whether individuals who completed an out-of-state administrator preparation program (APP) meet or exceed North Carolina requirements.

PEPSC, in consultation with the Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina Principal Fellows Commission, must develop a portfolio-based assessment system for use in applications for administrator licensure, and submit recommendations to the SBE by June 15, 2024.

Except as otherwise provided, this act became effective September 28, 2023.

Protect Our Students Act.

SL 2023-128 (H142)

S.L. 2023-128 does the following:

- Effective December 1, 2023, makes the crimes of sexual activity with a student and taking indecent liberties with a student Class G felonies.
- Effective December 1, 2023, modifies the definition of sexual activity with a student and taking indecent liberties with a student to include individuals who were in school within six months of the violation.
- Effective December 1, 2023, requires superintendents, assistant superintendents, associate superintendents, personnel administrators, and principals to report certain misconduct to the State Board of Education (SBE) if they know, have reason to believe, or have actual notice of a complaint that an employee licensed under Article 17E of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes engaged in misconduct that resulted in dismissal, disciplinary action, or resignation. If the employee resigns within 30 days of a complaint or during an investigation, the misconduct is presumed to have resulted in the resignation. Failure to report is a Class I felony.
- Requires the Center for Safer Schools to develop and produce age-appropriate videos on child abuse and neglect, including age-appropriate information on sexual abuse. The SBE must adopt a rule that requires that students in grades 6-12 view the video no more than 5 days after the first day of the school year, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.
- Effective July 1, 2023, forfeits the retirement benefits for school employees as a result of conduct directly related to the office or employment, which is the following:
 - An offense that would lead to an automatic revocation of a professional educator license without a hearing, and the commission of the offense occurred while the member was employed in a public school or working in a public school subject to a memorandum of understanding.
 - An offense which required the revocation of the member's licensure or certification required for the member's employment or office at the time of the commission of the offense.
 - Conduct that was directly related to the member's employment or office as determined by the Board of Trustees of the Retirement System.
- Requires the Buncombe County Board of Education and Asheville City Board of Education to jointly study the feasibility of merging the two local school administrative units, including the potential economic and educational impact of merging the school units and any other relevant information. The Boards must report their findings and recommendations to the standing committees of the General Assembly hearing elections matters no later than February 15, 2025.

Except as otherwise provided, this act became effective September 29, 2023.

Computer Science Graduation Requirement – Various Statutory Changes.

SL 2023-132 (H8), Sec. 1-3

Sections 1-3 of S.L. 2023-132 require the State Board of Education (SBE) to establish a computer science graduation requirement and include computer science instruction in the standard course of study.

These sections became effective September 29, 2023.

Revise Higher Education Accreditation Process – Various Statutory Changes.

SL 2023-132 (H8), Sec. 3.1-3.4

Sections 3.1-3.4 of S.L. 2023-132 require the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina (BOG) and the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) to adopt policies requiring that each constituent institution and community college (institutions) be accredited and be prohibited from receiving accreditation from the same accrediting agency for consecutive accreditation cycles. These sections also create a cause of action for institutions to bring against any individual who makes false statements to the institution's accrediting agency.

These sections became effective September 29, 2023. The new requirements for accreditation begin with applications for accreditation submitted on or after that date.

Age Verification for Access to Material Harmful to Minors – Various Statutory Changes.

SL 2023-132 (H8), Sec. 3.20

Section 3.20 of S.L. 2023-132 enacts the "Pornography Age Verification Act" (PAVE Act) which requires commercial entities that publish or distribute material harmful to minors on internet websites to use a commercial age verification system and creates a civil cause of action against entities that fail to comply with the requirements of the Act.

This section becomes effective January 1, 2024, and applies to websites accessed on or after that date.

Revise Oversight of High School Interscholastic Athletics – Insurance Law Amendments/Revise High School Athletics.

SL 2023-133 (S452), Sec. 17-20

Sections 17-20 of S.L. 2023-133 make various changes to regulation of interscholastic athletics, including

- Clarifying and modifying requirements for rules related to interscholastic athletics.
- Requiring the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) to enter into memoranda of understanding (MOU) with administering organizations and oversee middle and high school athletics.
- Requiring administering organizations to meet certain requirements and restrictions related to oversight of high school interscholastic athletics.
- Making administering organizations a public body under the open meetings law.
- Requiring public school units to annually report on interscholastic expenses and receipts.

- Requiring the Superintendent to study and report on various matters related to interscholastic athletics.

Except as otherwise provided, these sections became effective October 3, 2023.

Transformational Investments in North Carolina Health – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 4.10

Section 4.10 of S.L. 2023-134 recodifies many of the existing provisions relating to the University of North Carolina Health Care System and the East Carolina University Health Care System. It expands some of those provisions, giving the Board of Directors and Chancellor more authority, and it allows the UNC System to purchase insurance or self-insure against medical malpractice claims. It clarifies that the UNC System is a State agency and states that employees of both systems hired on or after January 1, 2024, are ineligible to participate in the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System. Finally, the act makes conforming changes throughout the General Statutes, appropriates \$420 million to the NC Care Initiative, and contains reporting requirements.

The appropriation and reporting provisions became effective July 1, 2023. The remaining provisions became effective October 3, 2023.

Medical Freedom/COVID-19 Vaccinations – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 5.8

Section 5.8 of S.L. 2023-134 creates several new statutes (G.S. 143-162.10, G.S. 130A-158.3, G.S. 153A-465, and G.S. 160A-499.10) that prohibit State agencies, local governments, and political subdivisions from discriminating against individuals based on their refusal to provide proof of, or to submit to, a COVID-19 vaccination, unless the vaccine is required for employees in a facility certified by federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), is required for employees as a condition of an entity receiving federal funding, or is required for employees of the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities. For purposes of this section, "COVID-19" is defined as the coronavirus disease of 2019.

The section also amends the immunization requirement statute (G.S. 130A-152) to prohibit the Commission for Public Health, public school units, community colleges, and constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina from requiring a student to provide proof of a COVID-19 vaccination or to submit to a COVID-19 vaccination or series of vaccinations unless the requirement for vaccination or proof of vaccination is required for participation in a program of study, or fulfilling education requirements pertaining to working, volunteering, or training, in a facility certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

This section became effective January 1, 2024.

High-Cost Healthcare Workforce Programs Start-Up Funds – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 6.2

Section 6.2 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Community Colleges System Office (System Office) to create the Fund for High-Cost Healthcare Workforce Programs (Fund), which must be used to assist community colleges in starting new programs in high-demand healthcare career fields that require significant start-up funds.

The System Office must create an application process allowing community colleges to apply for funds by the beginning of each fiscal year of the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium. Applications must include at least the following:

- A description of the proposed new program requiring start-up funds.
- Documentation of industry demand for the program or documentation of future local, regional, or statewide employment needs that will be met by the program.
- Total cash cost to start the program and maintain the program over two fiscal years.
- A plan for the fiscal sustainability of the new program.

Community colleges can only apply for funds to support one new program each fiscal year. Any awarded funds will remain available to the community college for two fiscal years.

Community colleges with total full-time equivalents (FTE) greater than 6,500 must match 15% of the total cash cost of the program with non-State funds. Community colleges with a total FTE between 2,500 and 6,500 must match 10% of the cost. There are no matching requirements for community colleges with FTE less than 2,500.

The System Office can adopt regulations, policies, procedures, or necessary rules related to the administration of the Fund, including the application process, use of funds, and eligibility requirements. The System Office can use up to \$100,000 each fiscal year for administrative costs.

The System Office must submit an initial report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 1, 2024, and an annual report thereafter for each year the System Office provides funds to community colleges from the Fund. The report must include at least the following information:

- The community colleges that received funds, the amount of funds, and the types of healthcare programs started.
- The use of funds by community colleges receiving awards, including costs associated with student instruction, faculty salaries, instructional supplies, related instructional equipment, and accreditation costs.
- Evaluation of the success of the new community college healthcare programs receiving funds.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Report on Certain Recurring Programs – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 6.3

Section 6.3 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the State Board of Community Colleges to report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by February 15, 2024, and annually thereafter on the outcomes related to (i) minority male mentoring programs, including the Minority Male Success Initiative and (ii) the Rowan Cabarrus Community College Biotechnology Training Center and Greenhouse at the North Carolina Research Campus in Kannapolis. The reports must contain information from the prior fiscal year on program activities, objectives, and accomplishments; itemized expenditures and fund sources; and the impact of the program on its intended purpose.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

North Carolina Community College Short-Term Workforce Development Grants – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 6.5

Section 6.5 of S.L. 2023-134 codifies the North Carolina Community College Short-Term Workforce Development Grant Program (Program) administered by the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC). The Program awards grants of up to \$750 to students pursuing short-term noncredit State and industry workforce credentials from available funds. Students must be eligible for in-state tuition. Criteria for eligibility must be established by the SBCC, who must also, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce, determine eligible programs of study for occupations in the highest demand in the State.

The SBCC must report on the Program annually beginning April 1, 2024, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the amount of funds distributed and number of students receiving funds.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Extend RISE Up Training and Credentialing Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 6.8

Section 6.8 of S.L. 2023-134 extends the RISE Up credentialing program implemented by the North Carolina Community Colleges System in partnership with the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association and the Retail Consumer Alliance Foundation through the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium. This section requires the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association and the Retail Consumer Alliance Federation to submit to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee an initial report by December 1, 2024, and a final report by December 1, 2025, on the results of implementing the credentialing program.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Community College Programs Serving Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled Students – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 6.9

Section 6.9 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) to create a community college training program (program) for up to 15 community colleges to provide opportunities for micro-credentials or other credentials that lead to increased employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The goal of the program is to inform community colleges and address cross-departmental supports within the individual community colleges on programs for individuals with IDD related to at least the following:

- Establishing best practices for providing vocational training for individuals with IDD.
- Providing financial and benefits counseling.
- Developing strategies on integrating assistive technology.
- Maximizing access, with supports, to credential and degree programs, including micro-credentials that are established by the SBCC.
- Identifying methods to increase orientation and integration of individuals with IDD into the college community to the greatest extent possible.
- Determining a needs assessment, marketing, and evaluation to serve a broad array of individuals with developmental and other similar disabilities or learning challenges to assure adequate demand for new or existing programs.

By May 1 annually, the Community Colleges System Office (System Office) must report on the program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division. The report must at least include the following:

- The impact of the program.
- The use of any additional positions created at community colleges.
- Professional development training for staff.
- Funding sources to build programs at community colleges that support postsecondary trainings and certifications that enable individuals with IDD to engage in competitive, sustainable employment.

From the recurring funds appropriated for the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium, the System Office must create at least two statewide positions for program support, provide professional development training for college advising staff, and explore funding sources to sustain programs for students with IDD.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Career Academies for At-Risk Students – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 6.9A

Section 6.9A of S.L. 2023-134 establishes a career academies program (program) between Cape Fear Community College (CFCC), New Hanover County Schools, and Pender County Schools (education partners) for underserved seventh through ninth grade students that will operate during the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium.

The education partners must offer a summer career academy program to up to 300 at-risk students that will introduce students to life on a college campus by visiting two career and technical education programs per day for five consecutive days for two consecutive weeks in different subject areas. The program must include speakers and support for financial aid and scholarship opportunities and an introduction to the Career and College Promise Program. In addition, CFCC must hire career liaisons for placement in education partner middle schools to support at-risk students and provide exposure to career and technical education opportunities.

CFCC, in collaboration with the other education partners, must report annually while funds are expended under the program, beginning October 1, 2024, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the results of the pilot program and the placement of the career liaisons in schools to support at risk students.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Community College System Governance and Authority Changes – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 6.10

Section 6.10 of S.L. 2023-134 makes changes to the governance structure of the North Carolina Community College System.

The State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) must use the following process to elect a President: (i) at least three final candidates must be submitted to the full SBCC from which the full SBCC must make its election; and (ii) the SBCC must conduct a vote on the election of the President with the candidate receiving a majority of votes of the entire SBCC being elected. The SBCC must then submit the name of the person elected as President for confirmation to the presiding officers of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the General Assembly on or before the 15th day following the election. The General Assembly must adopt a joint resolution to either confirm or deny confirmation with the following conditions: (i) the person elected can serve as interim President until the General Assembly adopts a joint resolution and (ii) if the General Assembly fails to adopt a joint resolution confirming the person by the date that either chamber reaches the 30th legislative day following the receipt of the name by the presiding officers, it is deemed that the General Assembly has denied confirmation. A person denied confirmation cannot serve as President or interim President.

The section of the act also makes the following governance and authority changes:

- Clarifies that SBCC actions that affect local boards of trustees or a person elected as the chief administrative officer of a local community college regarding withdrawal of State support; issues of noncompliance; and removal of trustees are not subject to judicial review.
- Changes the SBCC from 22 members to 19 members by removing the Lieutenant Governor, State Treasurer, and the Commissioner of Labor from the SBCC.
- Removes the Governor's appointments to the SBCC and increases the number of appointments by the General Assembly to the SBCC from 8 to 18.
- Allows the SBCC to meet 8 times per year rather than 10.
- Allows current members of the SBCC to serve out the remainder of their terms with new staggered terms beginning with elections in 2023.

Local Community Colleges —This section of the act changes the selection of trustees for local community colleges as follows:

- Eight members appointed by the General Assembly with two members annually, one appointed upon recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives and one upon recommendation of the President Pro Tempore.
- Four trustees elected by the board of county commissioners in which the main campus of the institution is located, one of whom can be a county commissioner. Each board of commissioners of any other county in the administrative area that provides plant funds to the institution must elect two additional trustees to the board, one of whom can be a county commissioner. A board of commissioners can delegate the election of one or more of its trustees to a board of education of a local school administrative unit located in the administrative area of the institution with the delegation having certain limitation such as expiring at the end of the term of office of the trustee with the possibility of renewal by the board of county commissioners.
- The president of the student government of the institution can be an ex officio member if the board of trustees agrees.

Each local board of trustees must submit information to the Legislative Library of the General Assembly by August 1 annually that includes: (i) the name, address, and county of residence of each trustee; (ii) the appointing or electing entity of each trustee; (iii) the name of a trustee being replaced in case of vacancy; and (iv) the dates each trustee's term begins and ends. Current members serving on a board of trustees of a local community college on the effective date of this section can serve the remainder of their terms with new members then being appointed or elected as provided in this section. Finally, the section repeals and amends various local modifications to boards of trustees of local community colleges.

All members serving on the SBCC and local boards of trustees will remain in their seats for the remainder of their terms; thereafter, new members will be elected or appointed in accordance with the new requirements. The changes removing the Lieutenant Governor, State Treasurer,

and the Commissioner of Labor from the SBCC are effective July 1, 2027, while the remainder of this section became effective July 1, 2023.

Vocational Rehabilitation Pilot Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 6.11

Section 6.11 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) to establish the Vocational Rehabilitation Pilot Program (Program) for the 2023-2024 to 2025-2026 academic years.

The Program will provide support services to community college students with intellectual and developmental disabilities to help those students reach their goals for employment and independence without duplicating the existing vocational support network. Community colleges can apply to the SBCC to participate in the Program, and will be selected by the SBCC in consultation with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services of the Department of Health and Human Services (DVR). The Community Colleges System Office must also contract with DVR to place student counselors at selected community colleges in the State.

By March 15, 2024, and annually thereafter in each year in which funds are expended during the Program, the SBCC, in consultation with DVR, must report on the impact of the Program on participants, including mental health, well-being, and job placement of participants.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Revise Multicampus Center Requirements – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 6.12

Section 6.12 of S.L. 2023-134 requires that for a community college facility to receive funding from the State Board of Community Colleges as a multicampus center, the facility must meet all of the following criteria:

- Be at least 4 miles away from the main campus of the community college and other multicampus center locations.
- Meet any other criteria established by the State Board.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Authorize the State Board of Community Colleges to Implement an In-State Tuition Pilot Program for Residents of Certain Georgia Counties – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 6.13

Section 6.13 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC) to create and implement a pilot program to allow Tri-County Community College to offer in-State tuition to up to 100 residents of the following Georgia counties that border North Carolina, so long as the out-of-state students do not displace a North Carolina resident eligible for in-State tuition:

- Fannin County.
- Rabun County.
- Towns County.
- Union County.

The pilot program expires at the end of the 2026-2027 academic year. Beginning September 30, 2024, and annually thereafter for the duration of the pilot program, the SBCC must report the results of the pilot program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division. The report must include at least the following information:

- Information on out-of-state students who enrolled at the in-State tuition rate, including:
 - The number of students enrolled.
 - The programs that these students chose.
 - Any programs unavailable to these students due to potential displacement of North Carolina residents.
- Any indicators of increased economic development as a result of this program.
- The number of out-of-state students enrolled who do not qualify for the in-State tuition rate.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 academic year.

Codify Funding for Children with Disabilities – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.1

Section 7.1 of S.L. 2023-134 codifies in statute the funding for children with disabilities. To the extent funds are made available, the State Board of Education must allocate funds for children with disabilities to each local school administrative unit (LEA) on a per child basis. Each LEA must receive funds for the lesser of (i) all children who are identified as children with disabilities or (ii) 13% of its allocated average daily membership in the LEA for the school year.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Codify Funding for Academically or Intellectually Gifted Students – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.2

Section 7.2 of S.L. 2023-134 codifies the funding formula for funds for academically or intellectually gifted students. The formula requires the State Board of Education to allocate funds for academically or intellectually gifted students on a per child basis and provides that a local school administrative unit must receive funds for a maximum of 4% of its allocated average daily membership for the current school year, regardless of the number of students identified as academically or intellectually gifted in the unit.

Prior to determining the allocation of funds for the 2024-2025 school year, the Department of Public Instruction must develop a uniform definition for "academically or intellectually gifted student" to be used throughout the State.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Codify Boilerplate – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.3

Section 7.3 of S.L. 2023-134 creates a new Article 32F in Chapter 115C titled "Supplemental School Funding" that codifies language regarding school funding that has previously been budgetary language rather than statutory. This section codifies the following supplemental funding categories:

- Low-wealth counties: used to provide instructional positions, instructional support positions, teacher assistant positions, clerical positions, school computer technicians, instructional supplies and equipment, staff development, textbook and digital resources, and for salary supplements for instructional personnel and instructional support personnel for local school administrative units located in whole or in part in counties in which the county wealth as a percentage of the State average wealth is less than 100%.
- Small county school system: for county school administrative units with an average daily membership of 3,300 or fewer students.
- Disadvantaged student: used to provide instructional positions or instructional support positions, professional development, intensive in-school or after-school remediation, diagnostic software and progress monitoring tools, teacher bonuses and supplements for local school administrative units based on the unit's eligible disadvantaged student population and teacher-to-student ratio.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Required Training to Count Toward Continuing Education Units – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.5

Section 7.5 of S.L. 2023-134 allows teachers to count hours spent on mandatory training programs toward the required continuing education credits for licensure renewal, if both of the following circumstances apply:

- The mandatory training program is required by State law or a local board of education as a condition of employment.
- The teacher has otherwise met the content-specific continuing education requirements set by the State Board of Education (SBE).

Additionally, this section prohibits the SBE from requiring continuing education credits solely related to digital teaching and learning for all professional educators. The SBE can require up to two credits that include digital teaching and learning as a component of the general or content-specific credit.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies to licenses renewed on or after that date.

Weighted Funding for EC Students – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.7

Section 7.7 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to develop a model for funding children with disabilities services on the basis of the reported cost of the services provided. DPI must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by January 15, 2024, on the new model of funding developed and a comparison by public school unit of funds provided under the existing model and the new model developed.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Career Exploration and Development Plans – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.13

Section 7.13 of S.L. 2023-134 requires, beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, all middle and high school students in a local school administrative unit (LEA) to complete a career development plan (CDP) by the end of seventh grade and to revise the plan by the end of tenth grade. Charter schools are encouraged to have students complete CDPs. Local boards of education must ensure that CDPs are easily accessible to students and parents, including written notice to parents on the creation of the CDP and how to access it, and provide assistance to students in creating the CDP.

The State Board of Education (SBE) must adopt rules to establish the minimum requirements for CDPs and designate the electronic application that will be used to access CDPs. At a minimum, the CDPs must include the following:

- A self-assessment of the student's career interests and skills.
- An exploration and identification of career pathways aligned with the student's self-assessment that includes information on education and training, the most cost-efficient path to entry, and school opportunities to explore and prepare for the career.
- An alignment of academic courses and extracurricular activities with the student's identified career interests, including an inventory of aligned courses in middle and high school and a record of the student's completed dual-enrollment, advanced placement, and certain other courses, extracurricular activities, and awards and recognition.
- A career portfolio for the student, which can include items such as the students' résumé, documentation of postsecondary plans, completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and occupational outlook for identified career interests.

Prior to the start of the 2024-2025 school year, the SBE must develop standards and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the local boards of education, as appropriate, must provide curriculum content for an elective middle school course in which students investigate and learn about career pathways. The standards must align with the requirements for CDPs and include a focus on experiential and hands on learning.

For the 2023-2024 school year, the SBE must establish a pilot of at least 20 LEAs to develop the plan requirements and professional development necessary for successful statewide implementation of CDPs in the 2024-2025 school year. DPI must develop and provide a CDP electronic application no later than the 2024-2025 school year to provide access for all students and parents to the student's CDP and integrate with career information available through other State agencies.

Except as otherwise provided, this section became effective July 1, 2023.

CTE Grants for Homebuilding Programs – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.19

Section 7.19 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to provide grants to assist public school units with program costs associated with career and technical education (CTE) programs related to homebuilding. DPI must allow high schools within public school units to use the Pre-Apprenticeship Certificate Training (PACT) program approved by the U.S. Department of Labor. A public school unit or regional partnership of more than one public school unit can apply to receive the grant funds. DPI must prioritize public school units located in a county with at least one local school administrative unit that received low-wealth supplemental funding in the previous fiscal year and have a high population of at-risk students or students with disabilities.

By November 3, 2023, DPI will make the application for grants for both the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 fiscal years available. Applications must be submitted no later than 60 days after applications are made available and be approved or denied within 30 days of submission.

All recipients of grants must report to DPI by October 15 of each year of the biennium on the outcomes of any programs funded by the grants, including data collection methods for reporting on student outcomes, impacts of the program, and the use of State funds. DPI must submit a report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the overall outcomes of the grant program by no later than December 15 of each year of the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Department of Public Instruction Funding in Arrears – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.20

Section 7.20 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to develop a model to fund public school units based on actual average daily membership (ADM) from the prior school year rather than projections for the upcoming school year. DPI must propose technical adjustments for public school funding to the State Board of Education for approval before submitting the model to the Director of the Budget. Additionally, DPI must submit the model to the Fiscal Research Division by February 15, 2024. The technical adjustments must include laws that would need to be adjusted or repealed, and a comparison of funding received under the old model and the recommended new model, sorted by public school unit.

DPI must distribute funds to public school units based on the model beginning with the 2024-2025 school year. For public school units whose actual ADM for the current year is higher than the actual ADM for the prior school year, DPI must provide funds from the ADM Contingency Reserve.

The requirement to develop a new funding model became effective October 3, 2023. The requirement to implement the new model beginning with the 2024-2025 school year becomes effective July 1, 2024.

Increasing Engagement in STEM – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.22

Section 7.22 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) to establish the Increasing Engagement in STEM Program (Program) for the 2023-2024 fiscal year to provide grant funds to public school units to engage in experiential science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education programs. Recipients must be selected by February 15, 2024. Grant applicants must submit a plan of how the public school unit will use the funds to increase STEM engagement of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students and include information

on (i) how the plan will use high-quality instruction methods and research-based best practices in STEM education; (ii) how grant funds will be used; and (iii) how the plan will be sustained beyond the end of the grant period. Grant funds can be used to pay stipends to teachers participating in the Program as well as third-party vendors to provide services or host STEM competitions.

Selection — In selecting recipients for the Program, the Superintendent must determine the size of grant awards given to each public school unit while ensuring a distribution of grant funds to various sized public school units. The following criteria must be followed:

- The total number of grant recipients cannot exceed 20 public school units.
- Recipients must reflect geographic diversity in the State as well as population diversity with (i) up to five public school units consisting of no more than one school; (ii) up to five public school units with an average daily membership of 4,000 or fewer students; (iii) up to five public school units with an average daily membership of 4,001 to 20,000 students; and (iv) up to five public school units with an average daily membership of 20,001 students or greater.

Report — The Superintendent must submit a report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 15, 2024, with the following information: (i) lists of the public school units that applied for grants and which ones received them; (ii) summary of how the grant funds were spent on Program activities; (iii) numbers and percentages of students enrolled in the school who participated in the Program with demographic data; (iv) how the public school units would use grant funds if the Program were to be continued; and (v) any recommendations to modify the Program to be more effective.

Evaluation — As a condition of receiving grant funds, a public school unit must designate both students who complete the grant-funded activities in the Common Education Data Analysis and Reporting System and a matched set of students with similar demographic characteristics who did not complete the Program, when possible, in a manner that will allow future analysis of outcomes for the students related to the following: (i) enrollment in STEM-related elective clusters in high school; (ii) graduation from high school within four years of entry; (iii) enrollment in a postsecondary STEM-related major, degree program, or certificate program within three years of high school graduation; (iv) completion of a postsecondary STEM-related major, degree program, or certificate program within six years of high school graduation; and (v) employment in a STEM-related field within eight years of high school graduation. The North Carolina Longitudinal Data System, in cooperation with all agencies with relevant data, must report annually to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the outcomes for both groups of students on each available data point beginning December 15, 2028, and ending December 15, 2039.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

After-School Robotics Grant Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.23

Section 7.23 of S.L. 2023-134 establishes the Educational and Competitive After-School Robotics Grant Program (Program) to promote after-school programs for robotics education and competition and to motivate students to pursue education and career opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). All public school units (PSUs) are eligible to apply to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for a grant to develop an educational and competitive after school robotics program with a robotics partner. A robotics partner is a third party entity that is approved by DPI as meeting certain criteria demonstrating that adequate support will be provided.

DPI must develop and publish criteria, guidelines, and required documentation to be submitted to apply for the Program in the upcoming school year, including evidence of a robotics partner relationship and a proposed budget on the following schedule:

Remote Charter Academies – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.26

Section 7.26 of S.L. 2023-134 authorizes, as part of an initial application or modification of an existing charter, a nonprofit to apply to the Charter School Review Board (Review Board) for approval of a remote charter academy that meets certain requirements. A charter with an approved remote charter academy can provide remote instruction to all enrolled students, as a hybrid instruction model, or in separate programs for remote and in-person instruction. Remote charter academies will provide instruction primarily online to students in a remote location both synchronously and asynchronously. Remote academies can include any combination of grade levels.

Eligibility: Remote charter academies can admit students from anywhere in the State (statewide remote charter academy) or students from the county where the charter is located and contiguous counties (regional remote charter academy). Students must have parental consent to attend a remote charter academy, and parents will receive information on successful characteristics for remote learning. Students cannot be denied admission solely on the basis of being a child with a disability. Students can be reassigned to in-person instruction offered by the charter school if that would be better for the child's academic progress.

Requirements: Remote charter academies must meet the same requirements as other charter schools, as well as the following:

- Remote charter academies must provide enrolled students with access to the necessary hardware, software, learning management platform, internet access, technical support, and any accommodations required by a student's individualized education program. Remote charter academies cannot charge rental fees. Damage fees can be charged under rules adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE).

- Remote charter academies can require students to attend in-person or proctored assessments for State-mandated student assessments or to fulfill graduation requirements identified by the academy. Optional in-person meetings between students and instructors or parents and instructors are also allowed at charter school facilities.
- Each approved remote charter academy will have a school code. Employees must meet the same standards as required for other charter schools. Sufficient digital teaching and learning support staff are required.

Approval: As part of the charter application or charter modification, a nonprofit must submit a plan to the Review Board for approval that includes the following:

- Whether the remote charter academy will be statewide or regional.
- The range of grades for which the remote charter academy will offer courses.
- How the remote charter academy will monitor enrollment, course credit accrual, progress toward graduation, and course completion.
- Hardware, software, and other infrastructure that support online learning.
- The measures that will be used to ensure both synchronous and asynchronous instruction support learning growth through a mastery of student achievement goals for the charter's educational program.
- The professional development that will be provided to those teaching in the remote charter academy related to the pedagogy of providing remote instruction.
- The identified characteristic for successful remote learning and criteria for admission.
- Any school nutrition services or transportation services that will be provided to students.

The Review Board must approve a charter application or charter modification that meets these requirements for a renewable term of five years. A nonprofit can apply for renewal of the remote charter academy for additional terms of five years. The Review Board must approve a minimum of two qualified statewide remote charter academies to operate beginning with the 2026-2027 school year.

Evaluation: The SBE must evaluate the success of remote charter academies based on school performance scores and grades, retention rates, attendance rates, and for grades 9-12, high school completion and dropout rates. The SBE must report by November 15 of each year to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the evaluation of these schools and on any recommended statutory changes.

Additionally, this section extends the current virtual charter school pilot program through the 2025-2026 school year. Participating pilot schools can enroll the authorized number of students from the 2021-2022 school year plus enrollment growth of up to 20% for the 2023-2024 school year. For the remaining two years of the pilot, the pilot schools are eligible for enrollment growth in the same manner as other charter schools. Pilot schools are eligible to apply for charter renewal as a remote charter academy at the conclusion of the pilot.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

School Health Personnel Allotment – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.27

Section 7.27 of S.L. 2023-134 requires local boards of education to provide school health support services. The State Board of Education (SBE) is required to create a funding allotment for school health personnel positions, which include school psychologists, school counselors, school nurses, and school social workers. Local boards cannot transfer positions out of the allocation for school health personnel, but they can convert positions to dollar equivalents for contracted services directly related to school psychology, school counseling, school nursing, and school social work.

The SBE can adopt rules to establish qualifications and training required for certified school nurses except that the SBE cannot require a nurse to obtain a four-year degree as a condition of employment.

This section also prohibits school counselors from assisting with the coordination or administration of standardized testing.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Support Program Reporting – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.28

Section 7.28 of S.L. 2023-134 directs Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc., and Beginnings for Parents of Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Inc. to report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the following information from the prior fiscal year by December 31, 2023:

- A detailed accounting of how State funds were spent.
- An accounting of any other funding received from other sources.
- Any planned expenditures or future uses of received funds not reflected in the accounting of State funds.
- The number of students served including generalized data on the age, grade level, and location of students served.
- A description of how effectiveness or student success is measured.
- Outcomes achieved and any other information deemed relevant.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Codify Use of Special State Reserve Fund for Transportation/Transportation Reserve Fund for Homeless and Foster Students – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.30

Section 7.30 of S.L. 2023-134 codifies the following funds:

- Extraordinary Transportation Costs Grant Program (Program) – The Program uses funds from the Special State Reserve Fund (SSRF) to cover extraordinary costs associated with the transportation of high needs students with disabilities. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) provides applications for local school administrative units and charter schools to apply for the extraordinary transportation funds that are awarded consistent with certain statutory criteria.
- Transportation Reserve Fund for Homeless and Foster Students (Reserve Fund) – The Reserve Fund provides for a grant program to cover extraordinary school transportation costs for homeless and foster students. DPI provides applications for local school administrative units and charter schools and establishes eligibility guidelines to award funds consistent with certain statutory criteria.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

School Health Personnel Profession Entry Report – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.31

Section 7.31 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to study and report the following regarding school health personnel (school psychologists, school counselors, school nurses, and school social workers) to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division by no later than January 15, 2024:

- Policies, practices, standards, and curriculum adopted or implemented, as appropriate, by the State Board of Education, the Department of Public Instruction, educator preparation programs, and public school units for people to receive training, licensure, and employment as school health support personnel in public school units.
- Barriers people face when entering each school health support profession because of the policies, practices, standards, and curriculum identified.
- Recommendations and any actions already taken to reduce and eliminate the barriers and improve the number and quality of school health support personnel employed in public school units.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

School Safety Grants – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.36

Section 7.36 of S.L. 2023-134 provides funding for the School Safety Grants Program (Program) to improve safety in public school units by providing grants for services for students in crisis, school safety training, safety equipment in schools, and subsidizing the School Resource Officer Grants Program through an application process administered by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) in accordance with certain criteria. The grants will be awarded in the following categories:

- Students in Crisis Grants – In consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), funds to contract with community partners to provide the following crisis services:
 - Crisis respite services for parents or guardians of an individual student to prevent more intensive or costly levels of care.
 - Training and expanded services for therapeutic foster care families and licensed child placement agencies that provide services to students who need support to manage their health, welfare, and safety and have cognitive or behavioral problems, developmental delays, or aggressive behavior.
 - Evidence-based therapy services aligned with targeted training for students and their parents or guardians.
 - Other crisis services, including peer-to-peer mentoring, likely to increase school safety.
- Training to Increase School Safety Grants – In consultation with DHHS, funds to contract with community partners to address school safety by providing training to help students develop healthy responses to trauma and stress. The training must be targeted and evidence-based and can include any of the following:
 - Counseling on Access to Lethal Means training for school mental health support personnel, local first responders, and teachers on the topics of suicide prevention and reducing access by students to lethal means.
 - Training for school mental health support personnel on comprehensive and evidence-based clinical treatments for students and their parents or guardians.
 - Training for students and school employees on community resilience models to improve understanding and responses to trauma and significant stress.
 - Training for school mental health support personnel on Modular Approach to Therapy for Children with Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, or Conduct problems.
 - Other training, including training on the facilitation of peer-to-peer mentoring, that is likely to increase school safety.
- Safety Equipment Grants – In consultation with DHHS, funds for the purchase of safety equipment for school buildings, including charter schools, and training associated with the use of that safety equipment.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) Pilot – The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) must allocate funds to New Hanover County Schools and Davidson County Schools for an AI School Safety Pilot Program that integrates AI technology into existing access controls, alerting protocols, and intercom systems. Participating public school units must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC) by January 15, 2025, on the implementation and impact of the pilot program.
- Subsidizing School Resource Officer Grants Program – If the Superintendent receives applications for grants for school resource officers under G.S. 115C-105.60 in excess of the amount of funding appropriated for school resource officer grants in the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium, the Superintendent can use the funds appropriated to DPI for school safety grants to cover the unmet need for school resource officer grants.

Nonrecurring funds appropriated to DPI in the 2022-2023 fiscal year for the 2021-2023 School Safety Grants Program and the nonrecurring funds appropriated by this section for the 2023-2025 School Safety Grants Program do not revert and remain available until June 30, 2025.

By April 1 of each year funds are awarded, the Superintendent must report on the Program to the JLEOC, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety, the Joint Legislative Commission on Governmental Operations, the Senate Appropriations/Base Budget Committee, the House Committee on Appropriations, and the Fiscal Research Division. The report must include the identity of each entity that received a grant, the amount of funding provided, the use of funds, and recommendations for the implementation of additional effective school safety measures.

The provision allowing funds to not revert became effective June 30, 2023, and the remainder of the section became effective October 3, 2023.

Life Changing Experiences – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.37

Section 7.37 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to use \$500,000 in nonrecurring funds for each year of the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium to contract with the Children and Parent Resource Group, Inc., to design, implement, and evaluate the Life Changing Experiences School Program (Project) in the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years. The Project must be operated and administered for students in grades 6 through 11 in at least the following local school administrative units (LEAs): Cleveland County Schools, Greene County Schools, Lenoir County Public Schools, Lincoln County Schools, McDowell County Schools, Mitchell County Schools, and Pitt County Schools. Additional LEAs can be selected to participate in the Project if there are sufficient funds. The funds cannot be used for any purpose other than to implement the Project. The Project must include theme-specific programs and certain additional follow up applications that address dangerous life and community threatening activities that negatively impact teenagers, including alcohol and other drugs, dangerous driving, violence, and bullying.

The Children and Parent Resource Group, Inc., in consultation with DPI, must submit a report on the Project by March 15, 2024, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division and include an accounting of expenditures and student outcome data related to the operation of the Project.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Participation Fee Grant Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.40

Section 7.40 of S.L. 2023-134 establishes a grant program administered by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) for qualifying public schools that are low-performing or serve a

population of at least 10% at-risk students. The governing board of the school can apply to DPI for grant funds to reimburse teachers for the cost of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification participation fee. DPI must develop criteria and guidelines for the grants, including requiring that reimbursements be prioritized based on the needs of the school and not requiring teachers to complete the NBPTS certification process in order to receive a reimbursement.

By January 15 of each year in which funds are awarded, DPI must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the impact of the program, including information on the number of applicants and awards, number of teachers reimbursed, information on teacher demographics, employment status, and licensure, and impact of the program on student performance and growth.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Require Conflicts of Interest Training for Certain Public School Employees – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.41

Section 7.41 of S.L. 2023-134 creates a new statute requiring all employees of local school administrative units who are involved in making or administering contracts to receive a minimum of two hours of conflicts of interest training regarding the making and administering of contracts. The training is required in every odd-numbered year and within 90 days of assuming the responsibility of making or administering contracts. Additionally, the training must include position-specific education on conflicts of interest and ethical standards of conduct. The local board of education can choose any qualified source to provide the training. All current employees involved in making or administering contracts have until April 3, 2024, to complete an initial training.

This section became effective October 3, 2023.

Combining of the Education and Workforce Innovation Commission Grant Programs – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.43

Section 7.43 of S.L. 2023-134 combines the CTE Grade Expansion Program with the Education and Workforce Innovation Program, which are both administered by the North Carolina Education and Workforce Innovation Commission (Commission). Funds for the consolidated program must be used by the Commission to award competitive innovation grants or CTE grade expansion grants. Charter schools and schools in local school administrative units are expressly eligible for the grants, in addition to local school administrative units or regional partnerships of multiple local school administrative units.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Teacher Assistant Tuition Reimbursement Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.44

Section 7.44 of S.L. 2023-134 codifies the Teacher Assistant Tuition Reimbursement Program (Program) which provides tuition assistance to part-time or full-time teacher assistants working in local school administrative units (LEAs) to pursue a college degree that will result in teacher licensure. LEAs can apply to participate in the Program pursuant to a process established by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The applications must identify current and ongoing needs for licensed teachers and the expected number of eligible teacher assistants that would participate in the Program. In evaluating applications, DPI must prioritize LEAs according to the following order: (i) LEAs that received funds under the Teacher Assistant Tuition Reimbursement Pilot Program established in prior Appropriations Acts of the General Assembly; (ii) LEAs located, in whole or in part, in a county with at least one LEA that received low wealth supplemental funding in the previous fiscal year; and (iii) all other LEAs.

Award of Funds – To the extent funds are made available for the Program, an LEA receiving funds under the Program must provide a teacher assistant participating in the Program an award of up to \$4,600 per academic year per teacher assistant for up to four academic years to defray the costs of tuition and fees at an educator preparation program at an institution of higher education while employed in the LEA as a teacher assistant. The following criteria apply under the Program:

- Tuition assistance awards granted under the Program can be for part-time or full-time coursework.
- A local board of education can grant a teacher assistant academic leave to pursue coursework that can only be taken during working hours.
- A teacher assistant must fulfill the student teaching requirements of an educator preparation program by working as a teacher assistant at his or her employing LEA.
- A teacher assistant must continue to receive salary and benefits provided for teacher assistants while student teaching in the LEA.

Selection of Teacher Assistants and Monetary Requirements – The act directs DPI to adopt initial and continuing eligibility to participate in the Program with standards to ensure that only qualified, potential recipients receive an award of funds for tuition and fees under the Program, including the requirement for satisfactory academic progress toward achieving teacher licensure and the following requirements:

- The teacher assistant must be employed by the local board of education in the LEA.
- The teacher assistant must be enrolled or provide a statement of intent to enroll in an accredited institution of higher education in North Carolina with an educator preparation program approved by the State Board of Education to pursue teacher licensure.
- The teacher assistant qualifies as a resident for tuition purposes under State law.

LEAs receiving grants pursuant to the Program must select teacher assistants to receive funds under the Program and prioritize teacher assistants who received an award in the prior academic

year and who are making satisfactory academic progress towards achieving teacher licensure. Each local board of education participating in the Program must have a memorandum of understanding with the institution of higher education in which an award recipient under the Program is enrolled that includes procedures for at least the following: (i) remittance of the award from the local board of education to the institution of higher education; (ii) endorsement of the funds awarded to the recipient to the institution of higher education for deposit into the account of the institution; (iii) return of a pro rata share of funds to the local board of education in the event a recipient withdraws from the institution of higher education prior to the end of a term or the recipient's employment with the local board of education is terminated.

Local and State Reports – By September 1 of each school year following at least six months of participation in the Program for that year, local boards of education participating in the Program must report at least the following information to DPI: (i) the number and amount of funds in tuition assistance awards provided to teacher assistants; (ii) the number of teacher assistant recipients who achieved teacher licensure, including the period of time from the issue of an initial tuition assistance award to the time of achieving licensure; (iii) the number of recipients who remained employed in the LEA after achieving teacher licensure. By December 1, 2024, and annually thereafter for each year funds are awarded pursuant to the Program, DPI must aggregate the information in the local reports and report that information to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

This section became effective July 1, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Teacher Apprenticeship Grant Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.44A

Section 7.44A of S.L. 2023-134 directs the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to establish the Teacher Apprenticeship Grant Program (Program). The purpose of the Program is to provide grants to local school administrative units (LEAs) to award funds for (i) the cost of tuition at an educator preparation program (EPP) for eligible teacher apprentices and (ii) salary supplements for teacher apprentices who become teachers in the LEA. LEAs can apply for participation annually through a process established by DPI that identifies current and ongoing needs for licensed teachers and the expected number of eligible teacher apprentices that would participate in the Program.

LEAs can award tuition funds to an eligible teacher apprentice of up to \$4,600 per academic semester for up to four academic years to defray the costs of tuition and fees for part-time or full-time coursework taken while employed in the LEA as an eligible teacher apprentice. An eligible teacher apprentice is an individual who meets all of the following criteria:

- Is a graduate of a high school in the LEA who was enrolled in a Career and College Promise Transfer Pathway Program leading to an associate degree in teacher preparation and earned one or more credits toward that degree.
- Is employed as a teacher apprentice in an elementary school in the same LEA. A teacher assistant works with a teacher of record to develop an expertise in teaching by observing

best education practices and gaining classroom experience with the goal of becoming a licensed teacher.

- Is enrolled part-time or full-time in a recognized EPP pursuing coursework toward a college degree that will result in teacher licensure.
- Is a State resident for tuition purposes.

Eligible teacher apprentices can also:

- Be granted academic leave to pursue coursework that can only be taken during working hours.
- Fulfill the student teaching requirements by working as a teacher apprentice at the employing LEA.
- Continue to receive salary and benefits while student teaching in the LEA.

If an eligible teacher apprentice becomes a licensed teacher and accepts employment in the same LEA, that teacher will receive a salary supplement each month during the first four years of employment as a teacher that is equivalent to the difference between the State funded salary of the graduate and the State funded salary of a similarly situated teacher with four years of experience on the "A" Teachers Salary Schedule.

Local boards of education receiving grants under the Program must make efforts to promote the Program to high school students enrolled in a Career and College Promise Transfer Pathway Program. DPI must establish criteria for initial and continuing eligibility to participate in the Program, and adopt standards to ensure that only qualified potential recipients receive an award of funds for tuition and fees. The standards must include satisfactory academic progress toward achieving teacher licensure.

LEAs receiving grants pursuant to the Program must prioritize the award of funds for eligible teacher apprentices who received an award in the prior academic year, and must enter into a memorandum of understanding with the institution of higher education in which an award recipient under the Program is enrolled, including procedures for remittance, endorsement, and return of funds in certain circumstances.

DPI must report no later than May 15, 2024, and annually thereafter while funds are awarded under the Program, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee regarding the Program, including information on funds awarded by LEA and EPP, demographics of recipients, placement rates, and recommendations to improve the Program and increase the number of teachers in North Carolina.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Economically Disadvantaged Public School Support Funds – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.45

Section 7.45 of S.L. 2023-134 creates a new statute requiring the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to establish the Economically Disadvantaged Public Schools Support Program (Program). The Program will provide funds to support the efforts of economically disadvantaged public schools that exceeded expected growth in the prior school year to continue to exceed growth. To the extent funds are available, DPI must allocate the funds annually to each governing body of an economically disadvantaged public school based on the relative proportion of students in each public school governed by the body. The funds will be used for curriculum, activities necessary to support students and instructional support personnel, and bonuses and retention programs for eligible employees, in the discretion of the governing body.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Revise School Transportation Funds Requirements – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.47

Section 7.47 of S.L. 2023-134 clarifies that the State Board of Education (SBE) must allocate transportation funds appropriated by the General Assembly to local boards of education based on the local school administrative unit's efficiency in transporting students. Funds must be allocated at the beginning of each fiscal year based on available data from the previous school year, except that the SBE can reserve 5%, rather than the previous 10%, for future allocation. Prior to April 1 of the fiscal year in which funds are reserved, the reserved funds can only be allocated in the event of any emergency need of a local school administrative unit. After April 1, the SBE must allocate remaining funds to all local school administrative units based on efficiency.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Study for Students with Extraordinary Costs/Report – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.49

Section 7.49 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the Department of Public Instruction to study the following and report any legislative recommendations based on the outcomes of the study to the House Appropriations Committee on Education, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Education/Higher Education, and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by January 15, 2024:

- A method of improving options for children with disabilities with intensive needs which require private placement in an Approved School consistent with the student's individualized education program (IEP).
- A method of determining that placement in an Approved School is the means that most appropriately suits the child's individual needs.
- Extraordinary costs incurred by the public school unit by student placement in Approved Schools.
- Methods of creating a network of Approved Schools into which a child with disabilities with intensive needs can be placed consistent with the student's IEP.
- A method of prioritizing dispersal of funds to public school units to assist with the cost associated with enrolling in an Approved School in early grades to incentivize public school units to enroll students in the Approved Schools at the earliest appropriate age.
- Recommendations on the proportion of a student's extraordinary cost to be paid from local, State, and federal sources, respectively, and to identify existing funds at each level that can be available for the purposes studied pursuant to this section.
- A method to monitor overidentification of children with disabilities with intensive needs.
- Methods to allow for Medicaid reimbursement for additional services, such as transportation, and expanding the eligible age range to receive reimbursement for services.
- An estimated range of costs associated with implementing the studied methods.
- The advisability of one or more pilot programs with one or more Approved Schools.

For the purposes of this section, the term "Approved School" means a private school with approved nonpublic education programs providing special education for students with intensive needs.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Special Needs Pilot Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.53

Section 7.53 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to contract with Amplio Learning Technologies, Inc., to create a new pilot program (Program) for a special education digital intervention software platform in Alamance County Schools, Catawba County Schools, and Nash County Schools to increase opportunities for students with special needs. The Program must focus primarily on students receiving interventions for speech language and reading development, including English language learners, to provide more optimized progress for the interventions and effective and efficient opportunities for Medicaid billing for speech language pathologists services and dyslexia related services.

DPI must report on the results of the Program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division by October 15, 2025, including information comparing Medicaid reimbursements rates both prior to and following participation and for both participating and non-participating schools.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Increase Amount for Developmental Delay Centers/Carry Forward/Grant Reserve/Report – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.54

Section 7.54 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to set the funding rate for each eligible student enrolled in a Developmental Day Center (Center) program up to a maximum of \$1,350 per month. Any funds remaining at the end of each fiscal year will not revert but will be transferred by DPI to a reserve to establish a grant program for Centers.

Beginning with the 2023-2024 fiscal year, when the balance in the reserve is at least \$50,000, DPI must solicit applications from licensed, community-based Centers approved by the Exceptional Children Division at DPI for grants. The grant application will require documentation of the expenditures for which the grant is being requested and any other information requested by DPI. Local school administrative units are ineligible to receive funds from this program.

By March 15 of each fiscal year in which grants are awarded, DPI must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC) on at least the following information:

- The Centers that received a grant.
- The balance of the reserve.
- The number of grant recipients.
- The dollar amount of each grant.
- The type of expenditure covered by each grant.

DPI must report by October 15 of each year that funds are received to the JLEOC on the following related to Centers:

- The number of students enrolled in Centers.
- The average funding rate for each eligible student enrolled in a Center.
- The percentage of eligible students enrolled in Centers that warranted dispersal of the maximum funding amount per month.
- The number of staffing vacancies in Centers, disaggregated by Center.
- Any other information DPI deems relevant.

The requirement that funds available at the end of the fiscal year do not revert became effective June 30, 2023. The remainder of this section became effective July 1, 2023.

Career and Technical Education Modernization and Expansion – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.55

Section 7.55 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to use up to \$2 million for each year of the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium to create a grant program for modernization of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programming, materials, training, and professional development in grades 6 through 12. A public school unit or regional partnership of more than one public unit can apply to receive grant funds, which must be used to procure and implement an online digital CTE learning platform that contains the following:

- Comprehensive courses with lesson plans, media-rich content and activities, and interactive assessments that align with North Carolina CTE standards.
- Modules that assist teachers in preparing students for high-wage, high-growth career areas.

By December 15, 2023, DPI must select approved providers of online digital CTE learning platforms that include the following components:

- Instructional strategies and guided lesson plans to assist teachers with classroom implementation and instructional differentiation.
- Media-based instructional content for providing demonstrations and instruction on skills required for applicable career areas.
- Multiple methods of delivery of instruction, including at least face-to-face, self-paced, and distance or hybrid learning.
- Guided projects and activities to incorporate hands-on application of skills.
- A focus on mastery-based learning.
- Reporting features to provide data on student progress.
- Guidance for students to obtain industry-recognized certifications.
- Career connections to provide examples of career opportunities following graduation from high school.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Enhanced School Bus Stop Arm Grants – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.57

Section 7.57 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) to establish the Enhanced School Bus Stop Arm Grant Program (Program) for the 2023-2024 fiscal year to administer funds to public school units to add, upgrade, or replace mechanical stop signals on school buses with either illuminated mechanical stop signals or extended mechanical stop signals to increase student safety. An application process must be developed with information on how to apply for the Program. The Superintendent must consider the type and

number of stop signal additions, upgrades, or replacements the public school unit proposes to complete and the number of bus routes or stops that are known to pose safety risks.

The Superintendent must submit a report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by April 15, 2024, with the following information:

- Which public school units received grants and in what amounts.
- Whether the public school unit purchased extended mechanical stop signals, illuminated mechanical stop signals, or both.
- Any outstanding needs including the amount to fulfill any remaining grant requests.
- Impact of the Program on student safety and any recommendations for additional school bus mechanical stop signal technology or implementation.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Eliminate Student Copay for Reduced Price Meals – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.58

Section 7.58 of S.L. 2023-134 directs that funds appropriated for reduced-price school meal copays be used to provide school breakfasts and lunches at no cost to students of all grade levels that qualify for reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program in the current school year. If the funds are insufficient, the Department of Public Instruction can use funds appropriated to the State Aid for Public Schools fund for this purpose.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

CEP Meal Program Incentive – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.59

Section 7.59 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to establish the CEP Meal Program Incentive for the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium, to expand public school participation in the federal Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program to increase the number of students with access to healthy, cost-free school breakfast and lunch. The incentive program will be available to public school units for the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

A public school unit or school within a public school unit is eligible for the incentive program if the unit or school qualifies for the CEP program but did not participate in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. By January 15, 2024, DPI must develop the application for the incentive program and make it available. Public school units and schools will submit their applications by March 1, 2024. The application must include at least the following:

- The school or schools that will participate in the CEP program.
- The Identified Student Percentage (ISP) for the school or schools for the 2024-2025 school year.

- The number of students enrolled for the 2024-2025 school year.
- The participation rates in the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs for the 2023-2024 school year.

Schools will be selected by April 30, 2024. If there are insufficient funds to award grants to all eligible units and schools, DPI must first prioritize awarding grants to units and schools with an ISP of greater than 55% and then prioritize the schools that will draw the greatest federal match. The grants will provide State reimbursement to cover up to the portion of the cost of meals that is not covered by the federal reimbursement. Schools receiving the incentive must offer breakfast after the bell and in the classroom.

No later than January 1, 2025, DPI must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on at least the following information:

- The number of schools that utilized the incentive.
- The number of students that received free meals that would not have otherwise received free meals.
- The amount of federal and State money participating public school units and schools received.
- Any increase on student success due to the school's utilization of the incentive and participation in the program.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

No Administrative Penalty for Unpaid Meal Debt – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.60

Section 7.60 of S.L. 2023-134 prohibits governing bodies of public school units from imposing administrative penalties on a student for unpaid school meal debt. Administrative penalties include withholding student records (transcripts, report cards, attendance records, and health records) and not allowing a student to participate in graduation or receive a diploma.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

High School Remote Instruction Flexibility Pilot – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.61

Section 7.61 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) to select 10 local school administrative units (LEAs) to participate in a remote instruction flexibility pilot program (Pilot) that allows local boards of education to establish a school calendar for high schools that uses up to 5 days or 30 hours of remote instruction to ensure that all final examinations for the fall semester are administered to students prior to December 31 of the school year. The remote instruction days or hours used as part of the Pilot are to be in addition to any other remote instruction time already authorized in law. The Pilot will be for the 2023-

2024 through 2027-2028 school years and is exempted from the calendar law that mandates school start dates.

The 10 LEAs selected by the Superintendent must be geographically diverse and represent the varying climate regions of the State including at least one LEA that would qualify for a good-cause school calendar waiver. Each local board of education participating in the Pilot must annually report to the Superintendent the following information:

- The high schools that participated in the Pilot with a copy of the high school calendars that designate all remote instruction time, including whether the instruction was remote under the Pilot or due to an emergency already authorized by law.
- The methods for providing instruction outside of the school facility.
- The impact on academic outcomes for students in comparison to the recent years where final examinations for the fall semester were administered after December 31.
- Identified advantages and disadvantages to using the Pilot calendar and additional remote learning.

The Superintendent must annually summarize the information provided by the participating local boards of education and provide a report of that information, including a copy of each participating local board of education's report, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee beginning September 15, 2024, and ending September 15, 2028.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

SparkNC Pilot for High-Tech Learning Accelerator Credit – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.62

Section 7.62 of S.L. 2023-134 establishes the SparkNC Pilot Program (Program) for the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium. The Program authorizes SparkNC, Inc. to partner with selected public school units (PSUs) to develop nontraditional, student-driven, modular learning experiences focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) that, when aggregated, provide a competency-based equivalency to a traditional elective course credit.

PSUs partnering with SparkNC must enter a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to meet certain requirements for the Program, including the provision of a physical learning lab staffed by a learning lab facilitator that will provide a site for collaborative learning and virtual networking.

Partnering PSUs must award the elective credit to any student who completes a combination of modules determined by SparkNC to provide the competency-based elective credit in that course upon verification of successful completion of the learning experiences and integrity of student work products by the learning lab facilitator. The elective credit must be denoted on student transcripts as High-Tech Learning Accelerator and as achieved mastery.

Learning lab facilitators are not required to hold teacher licensure, but must meet the standards established by the MOU and will be the teacher of record for students enrolled in the Program. Learning lab facilitators are not required to be paid on the same salary schedule as other teachers. Additional non-licensed personnel can be contracted with for the purpose of providing timely, real-world content, industry expertise, and student learning experiences.

Students can participate in the Program and aggregate learning experiences throughout the time the students are enrolled in the PSU and are not limited to a semester or school year. Learning experiences can be provided to students in person, remotely, or through asynchronous modules.

The elective credit can satisfy any computer science graduation requirement if approved by the Superintendent of Public Instruction upon recommendation of the Department of Public Instruction that the course meets the required domains of computer science.

For the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years, 18 designated PSUs can partner with SparkNC to participate in the Program.

SparkNC, in consultation with the partnering PSUs, must provide an interim report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by March 1, 2025, and a final report by March 1, 2026, disaggregated for each public school unit by grade level and school, on certain information including Program participation, retention, persistence, and completion, as well as student evaluation and interest in STEM following participation, cost per student, and recommendations for Program changes.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Extended Learning and Integrated Student Supports Competitive Grant Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.63

Section 7.63 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to use up to \$7 million for the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 fiscal years for the Extended Learning and Integrated Student Supports Competitive Grant Program (Program). The purpose of the Program is to fund high-quality, independently validated extended learning and integrated student support service programs for at-risk students (not performing at grade level, at risk of dropping out, at risk of school displacement due to suspension or expulsion) that raise standards for student academic outcomes by focusing on the following:

- Use of a successful evidence-based model.
- Inclusion of rigorous, quantitative performance measures to confirm effectiveness of the program.
- Deployment of multiple tiered supports in schools to address student barriers to achievement.
- Alignment with State performance measures, student academic goals, and the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

- Integration of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning opportunities or reading development and proficiency instruction.
- Minimization of student class size when providing instruction or instructional supports and interventions.
- Expansion of student access to high-quality learning activities and academic support that strengthen student engagement and leverage community-based resources.
- Utilization of digital content to expand learning time.

Grants will be used to award funds for new or existing eligible programs for at-risk students operated by nonprofit corporations and nonprofit corporations collaborating with local school administrative units. Grant recipients are eligible to receive grants for up to two years in an amount up to \$500,000 each year. The funds received must be matched at a rate of \$3 in grant funds to \$1 in nongrant funds.

Grant recipients must report to DPI on (i) alignment with State academic standards, (ii) data collection for reporting student progress, (iii) the source and amount of matching funds, (iv) and other measures before receiving a second year of funding. Grant recipients will also submit a final report on key performance data, including statewide test results, attendance rates, graduation rates, and promotion rates, and financial sustainability of the Program.

DPI must provide an interim report on the Program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by September 15, 2024, and a final report by September 15, 2025. The final report must include the final results of the Program and recommendations for future grant programs.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Prohibition Against "Three-Cueing" – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.64

Section 7.64 of S.L. 2023-134 prohibits the use of either a three-cueing system or a curriculum with visual memory as the primary basis for teaching word recognition in any instruction or intervention for NC Pre-K students. A three-cueing system is defined as a model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues. Additionally, the prohibition applies to students in kindergarten through third grade in local school administrative units, schools for the deaf and blind, charter schools, and laboratory schools. Further, the prohibited content cannot be included in Science of Reading coursework at educator preparation programs.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Salary Supplements for Teachers in Advanced Teaching Roles Schools – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.66

Section 7.66 of S.L. 2023-134 codifies salary supplements for teachers in Advanced Teaching Roles (Program). To the extent funds are made available for this Program, the State Board of Education must award funds to local school administrative units (LEAs) for annual salary supplements for teachers as provided in this section. LEAs participating in the Program must designate up to 15% of the teachers in each Program school as adult leadership teachers and 5% of teachers in each Program school as classroom excellence teachers. Participating LEAs must provide salary supplements for those teachers as follows: (i) \$10,000 for adult leadership teachers and (ii) \$3,000 for classroom excellence teachers.

The following additional requirements apply to salary supplements received under the Program:

- Loss of a salary supplement under this Program is not considered demotion for employment purposes.
- A teacher is eligible to continue to receive a salary supplement under this Program as long as he or she remains an adult leadership teacher or a classroom excellence teacher.
- A teacher is eligible to receive no more than one annual salary supplement under the Program at any time.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Daily Deposit Amount Adjustment – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.68

Section 7.68 of S.L. 2023-134 increases the amount of funds an individual school in a local school administrative unit can have on hand prior to deposit, following collection or receipt, from \$250 to \$1500.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Plasma Games Grant Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.69

Section 7.69 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to create a grant program for public school units to apply for funds to contract with Plasma Games, Inc., for the use of educational software to be used in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and career and technical education (CTE) courses. DPI must make an application available by November 15, 2023, and August 1 of each year thereafter that funds are made available. Public school units must submit applications by January 15, 2024, and October 1 of each year thereafter that funds are made available. The grants will be awarded by March 15, 2024, and December 1 of each year thereafter that funds are made available.

DPI must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee beginning May 15, 2024, and each year thereafter that funds are made available, on the outcomes of the program, including at least the following:

- The number of public school units that submitted an application.
- The number of grants awarded.
- The percentage of grants that were awarded to public school units that previously participated in the Plasma Games pilot program.
- The average size of grants awarded.
- The average daily membership (ADM) of each public school unit that received grant awards.
- The ratio of grant funds received compared to the ADM of the public school unit.
- The total number of Plasma Games licenses in active use in the State.
- Any other information the DPI deems relevant.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

North Carolina Education Corps Reporting – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.70

Section 7.70 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the North Carolina Education Corps to report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by February 15, 2024, on the results of its program to accelerate COVID-19 learning recovery through the recruitment, training, and deployment of corps members to work as tutors and mentors with public school students. The report must include at least the following:

- The number of tutors trained using funds provided.
- The number of students who worked with tutors trained by the program.
- The average amount of funding spent by the North Carolina Education Corps per tutor trained.
- The number of tutors hired by public school units after completion of the training provided by the program.
- Which public school units utilized tutors trained by the program.
- The impacts on student outcomes in public school units that utilized tutors trained by the program.
- The amount spent by each public school unit to hire tutors trained by the program.
- Any other information the North Carolina Education Corps deems relevant.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Allow Nonprofits to Provide Abuse/Sex Trafficking Training to Educators – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.71

Section 7.71 of S.L. 2023-134 allows nonprofit organizations with over 10 years of experience in providing research-based child sexual abuse prevention curriculum to provide training to school personnel on child sexual abuse and sex trafficking as required by law. These organizations would be in addition to other entities such as local nongovernmental organizations and local law enforcement officers.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

High School Diploma Endorsements – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.72

Section 7.72 of S.L. 2023-134, as amended by S.L. 2023-132, makes the following changes:

- Adds a graduation requirement of a passing grade in a computer science course, beginning with students entering the ninth grade in the 2024-2025 school year. This requirement does not apply to a student whose individualized education program states that the student's disability would prevent the student from completing that graduation requirement.
- Recodifies existing high school graduation requirements.
- Requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to develop a sequence of courses allowing a student to complete the credits required for graduation in a three-year period that will be noted on the student's transcript. Prohibits local boards of education from requiring any additional credits beyond those mandated by the SBE for high school graduation, beginning with students enrolled in tenth grade in 2023-2024.
- Recodifies current high school diploma endorsements and adds two new high school diploma endorsement:
 - Arts proficiency high school diploma endorsement: The SBE must develop the criteria for this endorsement to encourage students to obtain a well-rounded, high-quality arts education. The criteria must include at least a minimum of 4 arts credits with an unweighted 3.0 or higher grade point average and a minimum of 40 hours of arts-related extracurricular activities that meet certain criteria.
 - Citizenship proficiency high school diploma endorsement: The SBE must develop the criteria for this endorsement to encourage students to demonstrate their understanding of the basics of the American government and civic life. The criteria must include at least a passing score on a civics test composed of questions from the pool of publicly available questions to be used for the civics test given by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as part of the naturalization interview and test issued by USCIS. Charter schools must make this diploma endorsement available to students.

The SBE must report annually to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on high school diploma endorsements, including numbers of endorsements, beginning with reports due November 15, 2024.

This section became effective October 3, 2023. The SBE must make arts proficiency and citizenship proficiency high school diploma endorsements available to students graduating high school beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

Limited Teacher Licensure Changes – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.73

Section 7.73 of S.L. 2023-134 changes the limited teacher license from a nonrenewable license to a renewable license. For a teacher to renew a limited license, an affidavit from the employing local board of education that is signed by both the teacher's principal and superintendent must be submitted. The affidavit must state all of the following:

- The teacher is currently employed by the local board of education.
- The teacher is an effective teacher.
- The teacher will be courage to continue to pursue a continuing professional license.

For limited license renewals occurring on or before July 1, 2025, no additional requirements beyond the affidavit will be required.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies to renewal applications submitted on or after that date.

Out-of-State Teacher License Reciprocity – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.74

Section 7.74 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the State Board of Education to grant a continuing professional license (CPL) to a teacher who meets the following criteria:

- Is licensed in a state that has substantially similar licensure requirements as North Carolina.
- Has at least three years of teaching experience.
- Is in good standing with the other state.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies to out-of-state applicants for a CPL on or after that date.

Allow Home School Students to Sit for Advanced Placement/Preliminary SAT Exams – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.75

Section 7.75 of S.L. 2023-134 allows home school students to be eligible to take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, the PreACT, and advanced course examinations such as the Advanced Placement Course exam, International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme exam, and Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education as offered by the local school administrative unit (LEA) if the following criteria are met:

- The student can take the test at a school within the LEA that the student would be assigned to if the student attended public school.
- The student must have completed a course or test that shows equivalent competency to passing Algebra I.
- The student's parent must be charged the cost of the test by the LEA.
- The student's parent, or other responsible adult designated by the parent, can be required by the LEA to serve as a proctor in order for the student to take the test, if the addition of the student prevents the LEA from meeting the required proctor-student ratio for that test at that school.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Searches of Student's Person – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.76

Section 7.76 of S.L. 2023-134 requires policies governing searches of students to be consistent with the constitutions, statutes, and regulations of the United States and North Carolina. Searches performed by school officials must be executed using narrowly tailored methods that are as minimally intrusive as possible. Governing body policies must require all searches of students be conducted in private by one school official and one adult witness who are the same sex as the student being searched.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

State of the School Administration Profession Report – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.77

Section 7.77 of S.L. 2023-134 creates the report on the State of the School Administration Profession Report. The State Board of Education must submit an annual report on school principals in North Carolina that includes data on the decisions of principals to leave the profession of school administration or move to a different position, including the number of principals who:

- Left the profession without remaining in the field of education.
- Left to become a principal in another school in the State.
- Left for another type of educational position and the type of position.
- Left a low-performing school.
- Moved to a low-performing school.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies beginning with the report due December 15, 2024.

Study Status and Cost of Carbon Monoxide Alarms and Radon Testing in Schools – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.78

Section 7.78 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to survey all identified public schools to determine the number of existing school buildings that meet the following criteria:

- Are not currently equipped with carbon monoxide alarm and detection systems.
- If required to be in compliance with Fire Prevention Code requirements for new buildings, would be required to install carbon monoxide alarm and detection systems.

Additionally, the SBE must survey all identified public schools to determine the need and implementation of radon gas testing.

The SBE must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the following by December 15, 2023:

- The number of non-equipped buildings statewide, and by identified public school.
- The estimated cost statewide, and by the identified public school, to permit, install, and inspect all non-equipped buildings with carbon monoxide alarm and detection systems and radon gas testing.

"Identified public schools" means (i) schools in a public school unit, except for charter schools; (ii) the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics; (iii) the University of North Carolina School of the Arts; (iv) schools operated by the Department of Health and Human Services; and (v) schools operated by the Division of Juvenile Justice of the Department of Public Safety.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Clarify that Nonpublic Schools May Provide Remote Instruction and that a Nonpublic School Shall Provide In-Person Instruction to be Eligible to Receive Students with Scholarship Grants – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.80

Section 7.80 of S.L. 2023-134 allows a nonpublic school to provide remote instruction if the school maintains copies of all required records at an administrative office that is physically located in the State. Remote instruction means instruction delivered to students in a remote location outside of a school facility, either synchronously or asynchronously.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Opportunity Scholarship Financial Impact Report/Reinvestment in Public Schools – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.82

Section 7.82 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) to provide to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) the following information no later than October 15 of each year:

- Nonpublic schools in which Opportunity Scholarship grant recipients are enrolled, including the number of scholarship grant students at each nonpublic school.
- For each scholarship grant recipient, award amounts and sufficient personally identifiable information to track the recipient's continued enrollment in a nonpublic school. This information is confidential and is not a public record.

DPI must report no later than April 1 of each year to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the cumulative difference in the current school year between the Opportunity Scholarship grant award amount for each prior public school attendee enrolled in a nonpublic school and the average State per pupil allocation for daily membership for a student in a public school unit. A "prior public school attendee" means any scholarship grant recipient who was in membership in a public school unit for the majority of the first or second month of the school year immediately prior to enrollment in a nonpublic school, beginning with students enrolled in a public school unit in the 2023-2024 school year or subsequent school years.

This section extends certain dates by which the SEAA is required to report.

Additionally, the section states that it is the intent of the General Assembly to reinvest in the public schools any savings realized by the State each year, beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, because of the transfer of a student from a public school unit to a nonpublic school where the student accepts an Opportunity Scholarship grant award that is less than 100% of the State per pupil allocation for average daily membership for a student in a public school unit.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Clarify Minimum Service Requirements for Paid Parental Leave – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.83

Section 7.83 of S.L. 2023-134 clarifies that the rules adopted by the State Human Resources Commission providing for a period of minimum service before an employee is eligible for paid parental leave must provide that the period of minimum service can be met by aggregating employment at any of the following:

- State agencies, departments, and institutions, including The University of North Carolina.
- Public school units that provide paid parental leave in accordance with G.S. 126-8.6.
- Community colleges located in North Carolina.

Additionally, if the board of directors of a charter school does not provide paid parental leave, it must provide written notice to individuals upon offering employment.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Limit Discretion to Withhold or Reduce Charter School Funding to Review Board and Superintendent of Public Instruction – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 7.84

Section 7.84 of S.L. 2023-134 limits the discretion of the State Board of Education to withhold or reduce charter school funds except in certain situations. See summary for S.L. 2023-110.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

The University of North Carolina Building Reserve Study – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.2

Section 8.2 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina to study and report by April 1, 2024, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the building reserve model. At a minimum, the report must include the following information:

- For all buildings, disaggregated by constituent institution and fund source:
 - Expenditures related to operation and maintenance costs for the 2022-2023 fiscal year.
 - The number of full-time equivalent positions for building operation and maintenance used in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.
 - Recurring expenditures generated by the current building reserve model.

- The number of full-time positions generated by the current building reserve model.
- An analysis of the above including:
 - Any instances where the current building reserve model aligns or misaligns with full-time equivalent positions and actual expenditures of the constituent institution.
 - Any substantial differences among constituent institutions in actual operating and maintenance expenditures compared to projected expenditures under the building reserve model.
 - Recommendations to improve the process of providing operation and maintenance funds for buildings.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Completion Assistance Programs – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.3

Section 8.3 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina (BOG) to create a Completion Assistance Program (Program) at the following constituent institutions for the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium:

- Elizabeth City State University.
- Fayetteville State University.
- North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University.
- North Carolina Central University.
- The University of North Carolina at Asheville.
- The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
- The University of North Carolina at Pembroke.
- Winston-Salem State University.

Students enrolled in a Program can receive up to \$1,000 per academic year to pay for the costs of continuing attendance and earning necessary credit hours at the constituent institution. A student who meets at least the following requirements is eligible to receive funds:

- Needs financial assistance to remain enrolled at the eligible constituent institution and earn credits necessary to graduate on time.
- Is a resident for tuition purposes.
- Meets satisfactory academic progress, as determined by the Board.
- Has completed or is on track to complete at least 60 academic credit hours by the end of the semester in which the funds are provided.
- Has completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the academic year in which the funds are provided.
- Has an unpaid balance with the eligible constituent institution. This can include an unpaid balance for tuition, fees, room, board, or other expenses of attendance.

The BOG must report on each Program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by March 15, 2025. The report must include an analysis of the impact of each Program on on-time graduation rates and student debt at graduation.

From the nonrecurring funds appropriated for the Programs, the BOG must allocate funds to each eligible constituent institution proportional to the number of undergraduate students enrolled at each eligible constituent institution who are residents of North Carolina and recipients of a federal Pell Grant.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Establish the School of Civic Life and Leadership at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.5

Section 8.5 of S.L. 2023-134 as amended by Section 3.10 of S.L. 2023-132 directs the Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in consultation with the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina (BOG), the Provost of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Provost), and faculty and administration officials at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), to establish the School of Civic Life and Leadership at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (School). The School must meet the following requirements:

- Provide course opportunities for students that can focus on the development of democratic competencies informed by American history and the American political tradition, with the purpose of fostering public discourse and civil engagement necessary to promote democracy and benefit society as well as develop programming on these topics and provide resources to students, faculty, and the general public.
- Subject to approval of the Provost and the inaugural dean of the School, house the Program on Public Discourse.
- Hire at least 10 and no more than 20 faculty members from outside UNC-CH. These faculty members must be hired with permanent tenure or be eligible to receive permanent tenure in accordance with policies adopted by the BOG and UNC-CH. All faculty hired by or appointed to the School must be subject to the approval of the dean of the School. Faculty members can hold joint or courtesy appointments with other existing units of UNC-CH.

The section specifies that if the nonrecurring funds appropriated to the BOG for the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium to be allocated to UNC-CH for the School are insufficient to establish the School, UNC-CH must expend sufficient additional funds to achieve that purpose. The Provost must name the inaugural dean of the School by December 31, 2023, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division by March 15, 2024, on progress made toward establishing the School and factors affecting the long-term sustainability of the School.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Reduce Number of Required University of North Carolina Laboratory Schools from Nine to Eight – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.6

Section 8.6 of S.L. 2023-134 reduces the number of laboratory schools that must be established and operated by constituent institutions from nine to eight.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Educational Opportunities Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.8

Section 8.8 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina (BOG) to establish a College of Educational Opportunities Program (Program) for students 22 years of age and older with intellectual and developmental disabilities. North Carolina State University (NC State) will develop and operate the Program beginning in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. North Carolina Central University (NC Central) will adapt and operate the Program as developed by NC State beginning in the 2024-2025 fiscal year. The Program will provide post-secondary opportunities for eligible students, including the following:

- A person-centered planning process.
- The opportunity to pursue educational credentials, including degrees, certificates, and other nondegree credentials.
- Inclusive academic enrichment, socialization, independent living skills, and integrated work experiences to develop career skills that can lead to gainful employment.
- Individual supports and services for academic and social inclusion in academic courses, extracurricular activities, and other aspects of campus life.

Funds provided for the Program will be used for administrative and programmatic staff, training for faculty, improvements to existing assistive technologies and other support services, scholarships for economically disadvantaged eligible students, additional supports such as counseling, and outreach. For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, \$3 million will be allocated to NC State. For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, \$3 million will be allocated to both NC State and NC Central.

No later than May 15, 2024, and annually thereafter, the BOG must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the impact of the Program.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Career and Technical Education Grants for Agriculture – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.9

Section 8.9 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Agriculture Extension of North Carolina State University to provide funding to the North Carolina Future Farmers of America (FFA) to provide and administer grants for the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years to fund items necessary for the agriculture education program operated as a part of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program at a given middle or high school within a public school unit. A public school unit or a regional partnership of more than one public school unit can apply to receive funds. When awarding grants, FFA must prioritize public school units that meet the following criteria:

- Are located, in whole or in part, in a county with at least one local school administrative unit that received low-wealth supplemental funding in the previous fiscal year.
- Have a high population of at-risk students or students with disabilities.

Grant recipients can make items purchased with grant funds available to any student within the public school unit or partnership regardless of whether the student is identified as at-risk or a student with a disability.

FFA must create and make available an application for grants no later than 30 days after the act becomes law (October 3, 2023). Applicants must submit applications to receive grant funds to FFA by June 15, 2024. Applications must be approved or denied within 30 days.

Grant recipients must submit a report to FFA no later than October 15, 2024, on the outcomes of any programs funded by the grants, including data collection methods for reporting on student outcomes, impacts of the program, and use of State funds. FFA must submit a report on the overall outcomes of the grant program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division by December 15, 2024.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Board of Governors Study New Teacher Support Program/Elizabeth City State – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.10

Section 8.10 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina to report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by December 15, 2023, on the advisability and feasibility of incorporating additional constituent institutions, including Elizabeth City State University, as administrators of the New Teacher Support Program.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Require Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary Programs Report and Establish Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary Program At UNC-W – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.12

Section 8.12 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) to establish a certificate accomplishment program for students with intellectual disabilities to be approved by the United States Department of Education (US DOE) as a Comprehensive Transition Postsecondary Program (CTP Program) in accordance with federal law.

No later than March 15, 2025, UNCW must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC) and the Fiscal Research Division on its progress in establishing the CTP Program, including number of participants, additional costs to provide scholarships to participants, and whether the CTP Program has been approved by the US DOE.

The University of North Carolina System Office must report to the JLEOC by March 15 annually on the impact on participants of CTP Programs at constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina, including information on admissions requirements, number of participants, and participant outcomes.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Agriculture Analytics Platform Initiative – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.13

Section 8.13 of S.L. 2023-134 requires North Carolina State University (NC State) and North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T) to contract with SAS Institute, Inc. to establish or maintain a software platform to use data collection and analytics to improve agricultural systems and agricultural profitability. Funds will be used for software, equipment installation, cloud hosting, and technical support. NC State and NC A&T will collaborate in the creation and use of these platforms as much as practicable.

No later than August 15, 2025, NC State and NC A&T must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the impact of the initiative on the following:

- The sustainability and profitability of agricultural systems in the State, including any improved efficiencies.
- Research grants secured by each constituent institution.
- Student and faculty recruitment and retention.
- Engagement and collaboration with private farmers in the State.
- Faculty research on agriculture.
- Collaboration between NC State and NC A&T.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

University of North Carolina System Faculty Realignment Incentive Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.14

Section 8.14 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina (BOG) to create a Faculty Realignment Incentive Pilot Program (Program) for constituent institutions to award severance payments to identified faculty members. Funds for the Program will be distributed among the constituent institutions based on criteria established by the President of The University of North Carolina. To qualify for a severance payment under the Program, an identified faculty member must be a full-time, tenured faculty member employed by a constituent institution who meets the following criteria:

- Is at least 55 years of age.
- Meets either of the following criteria:
 - Is eligible to commence retirement with an early or service retirement allowance under the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS).
 - Is vested in the Optional Retirement Program (ORP) for The University of North Carolina.
- Does not receive disability or workers' compensation benefits.

The Program must meet at least the following requirements:

- An identified faculty member is selected to receive a payment under the Program in the discretion of the employing constituent institution.
- Severance payments are equivalent to the identified faculty member's base salary from the prior academic year.
- Severance payments are exempt from payroll deductions for retirement contributions and are not considered compensation for purposes of the supplemental plans administered by The University of North Carolina or plans administered by the Supplemental Retirement Board of Trustees.
- If an identified faculty member does not qualify for the full employer premium contribution for retiree health coverage provided under TSERS or ORP, then the constituent institution where the identified faculty member is employed can provide the faculty member, in addition to a severance payment, an amount equivalent to 12 months of the full employer contribution to the employee health insurance premium.

By December 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, while funds are expended under the Program, the BOG must report at least the following information on the Program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division, disaggregated by constituent institution:

- The number of identified faculty members that received funds under the Program.
- The total amount paid out by the Program.

Funds appropriated for the Program will not revert and will remain available until expended.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

University of North Carolina at Wilmington Research Program in Critical Workforce Areas Funds and Report – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.17

Section 8.17 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNC-W) to expand research programs in critical research areas to maintain its classification in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education as R2 – High Research Activity. This is to be implemented from the recurring funds appropriated to the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina for the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium to be allocated to UNC-W for research programs. UNC-W can use these funds only to expand relevant research programs in critical research areas and cannot supplant other funds already allocated for these purposes.

By March 15, 2024, and every year thereafter in which these funds are provided, UNC-W must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the use of the funds with at least the following information:

- A detailed explanation of how the funds are being used, including all expansions on research programs supported by these funds since the previous report and the nature of each expansion.
- All critical research areas as defined by UNC-W.
- The impact of the expansions on the critical research areas, including the extent to which the expansions support the continued classification of UNC-W as a High Research Activity institution.
- Recommended actions to maintain the classification of UNC-W as a High Research Activity institution or to improve that classification to R1 – Very High Research Activity.
- Any other matter UNC-W deems relevant to the efficient and effective expenditure of these funds.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Revise Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.18

Section 8.18 of S.L. 2023-134 limits the Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund (Trust Fund) and matching funds to challenge grants for those funds to endowments for professors for degree programs in science, technology, mathematics, and engineering (STEM) subject areas.

By December 15, 2024, and annually thereafter, the Board of Governors must identify and provide to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee a list of degree programs in STEM subject areas and the number of distinguished professorships at each constituent institution

funded pursuant to the Trust Fund in each STEM subject area. The Board of Governors must also make the list of degree programs in STEM subject areas available on its website.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies to distinguished professorships established on or after that date.

Green Industry Economic Impact Study/North Carolina State University – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.21

Section 8.21 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the North Carolina State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) to study the statewide, regional, and county-level economic impact of the green industry in the State. CALs must consult with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the NC Green Industry Council in conducting this study and is required to report the results no later than January 15, 2025 to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and Economic Resources. As used in the section, "green industry" refers to the production, design, installation, maintenance, and sale of plants and related goods and services to enhance, beautify, and protect human environments and provide jobs and economic growth.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Clarify Definition of Eligible Private Institutions for Patriot Scholarship Programs – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8.22

Section 8.22 of S.L. 2023-134 changes the private institutions at which students eligible to receive the Patriot Star Family Scholarship Program and the Patriot Star Family Recovery Scholarship Program can attend. The private institutions must be a junior college, senior college, or university that meets all of the following requirements:

- Is operated and governed by private interests not under the control of the federal government, the State, or any local government.
- Has a main permanent campus in the State.
- Does not operate for profit.
- Has a curriculum primarily directed toward awarding associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degrees.
- Is eligible to participate in the Children of Wartime Veterans scholarship program or is accredited by an accrediting agency that is recognized by the United States Department of Education as a reliable authority concerning the quality of education or training offered by institutions of higher education.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies to applications for scholarship awards submitted on or after that date.

Washington Center Internship Scholarship Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.1

Section 8A.1 of S.L. 2023-134 establishes the Washington Center Internship Scholarship Program (Program). The State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) must award scholarship grants to students who are residents of North Carolina and are enrolled in their second year or higher in a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina to attend a semester term internship, summer term internship, or a one- to four-week public policy and career readiness seminar program at The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars (Washington Center) located in Washington, D.C. SEAA must administer the Program pursuant to guidelines and procedures that it establishes consistent with its practices for administering State-funded financial aid. The guidelines and procedures must include an application process and schedule, notification and disbursement procedures, standards for reporting, and standards for return of funds when a student withdraws from the Program. A student who meets the eligibility criteria of the Washington Center can apply for a grant to cover costs related to the semester term internship (up to \$10,000), summer term internship (up to \$8,000), or shortened public policy and career readiness program (up to \$4,000).

If an eligible student also receives a scholarship or other grant covering the cost of attendance for the Program, then the amount of the State grant must be reduced by an appropriate amount determined by the SEAA so that the sum of all grants and scholarship aid covering the cost of attendance does not exceed the cost of attendance, including Program fees, housing, and incidental costs. SEAA must establish the cost of attendance in accordance with information provided to the SEAA by the Washington Center.

A student participating in the Program must do the following:

- Intern four days a week with a nonprofit corporation, private company, federal agency, or a member of the United States Congress.
- Take an academic class taught by the Washington Center's faculty.
- Participate in career readiness training programs.
- Be responsible for a final portfolio project outlining work completed during the Program.

By December 1, 2023, the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina must develop and communicate guidance to constituent institutions on a process for awarding up to three academic credit hours for participation in an internship.

Any funds that are unencumbered for the Program at the end of each fiscal year do not revert to the General Fund but remain available for the Program. SEAA can use up to 1% of the funds appropriated per year for administrative costs.

By September 1, 2024, and each year thereafter in which grants are received, SEAA, in consultation with the Washington Center, must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the implementation of the Program,

including the number of participating students and the award amount for each semester or summer term or shortened seminar program by constituent institution.

This section became effective July 1, 2023, and applies beginning with the award of scholarship grants for the 2023-2024 academic year.

State Education Assistance Authority Disburse State's Scholarships for Children of Wartime Veterans – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.2

Section 8A.2 of S.L. 2023-134 directs the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) to disburse the Scholarships for Children of Wartime Veterans (Scholarships) rather than the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA). The DMVA will continue to manage and maintain the Scholarships. The Veterans' Affairs Commission must select recipients for Scholarships and notify SEAA of the recipients for the disbursement of Scholarships and indicate the recipients that qualify for Scholarships funded with monies from the Escheat Fund. From the funds appropriated from the General Fund each fiscal year to support the Scholarships, SEAA can use up to \$150,000 each fiscal year for administrative costs for the disbursement and accounting activities for the program.

This section became effective July 1, 2023, and applies beginning with Scholarships awarded for the 2024-2025 academic year.

Permit North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics and University of North Carolina School of the Arts Tuition Scholarships to be Used for Summer Tuition and Establish Institutional Trust Fund – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.3

Section 8A.3 of S.L. 2023-134 allows tuition grants for graduates from the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics and the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (graduates) to be used for summer terms as well as fall and spring semesters, effective beginning June 30, 2023, for 2022-2023 graduates.

Beginning with 2023-2024 graduates, graduates must submit a completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form to receive tuition grants.

Effective June 30, 2023, tuition grant funds received by the State Education Assistance Authority and interest earned on those funds must be placed into an institutional trust fund.

Except as otherwise provided, this section became effective October 3, 2023.

Revise Teaching Fellows Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.4

Section 8A.4 of S.L. 2023-134 revises the North Carolina Teaching Fellows Program by expanding the qualifying licensure areas to include elementary education (K-6) in addition to special education and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math).

Additionally, this section requires the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) to administer the Teaching Fellows Program in cooperation with 10 institutions instead of only 8. Institutions with educator preparation programs enrolling loan recipients in an elementary education program must provide training that is aligned with the Science of Reading. A third-party entity will biennially evaluate whether the institution's training is aligned with the Science of Reading.

This section also increases the amount per loan award from \$4,125 to \$5,000 per semester. For each year that a teacher who has received a forgivable loan remains a qualifying teacher, the SEAA will forgive one year's worth of the loan, including any interest that has accrued.

This section became effective July 1, 2023, and applies to applications for the award of funds beginning in the 2024-2025 academic year.

Expand Eligibility for Opportunity Scholarships – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.6(a)-(j)

Section 8A.6(a) – (j) of S.L. 2023-134 makes multiple changes to the Opportunity Scholarship Program, including expanding eligibility for scholarships.

Eligibility – A student is now eligible if the student meets the following requirements:

- Resides in North Carolina.
- Has not yet received a high school diploma.
- Is eligible to attend a North Carolina public school.
- Has not been enrolled in a postsecondary institution as a full-time student taking at least 12 hours of academic credit.
- Has not been placed in a nonpublic school or facility by a public agency at public expense.

The State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) is required to create a domicile determination system to verify that domicile requirements are met for all applicants. In addition, SEAA is required to annually select and verify 4% of scholarship grant applications that qualify for an amount related to income eligibility, rather than the previous requirement of 6%.

For the 2024-2025 school year only, in lieu of submitting evidence electronically to SEAA through a domicile determination system, parents must certify that the domicile requirements are met. SEAA must select 6% of the applications for the 2024-2025 school year to verify the domicile requirements are met.

Scholarship Amount and Priority – Based on household income, students can receive a scholarship grant equal to a percentage of the average State per pupil allocation for average daily membership in the prior fiscal year. Eligible students will be awarded scholarship grant amounts as follows:

- 100% of the per pupil allocation for eligible students residing in households with an income level not in excess of the amount required for the student to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.
- 90% of the per pupil allocation for eligible students residing in households with an income level between the amount required for the student to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and not in excess of 200% of that amount.
- 60% of the per pupil allocation for eligible students residing in households with an income level between 200% of the amount required for the student to qualify for free or reduced-price lunch and not in excess of 450% of that amount.
- 45% of the per pupil allocation for all other eligible students.

When awarding scholarship grants, SEAA must first prioritize eligible students who received a scholarship grant in the prior school year. Next, SEAA must prioritize eligible students based on their household income level.

Nationally Standardized Testing – Nonpublic schools receiving scholarship grants must administer a nationally standardized test designated by SEAA in 3rd and 8th grade, and the ACT in 11th grade. For all other grades four and higher, the school must continue to administer its choice of nationally standardized test that meets specified criteria. Schools must do the following for any grade in which more than 25 scholarship grant recipients are enrolled:

- Report aggregate 3rd, 8th, and 11th grade scholarship grant recipient test performance data to SEAA.
- Retain test performance data for scholarship grant recipients in all other grades and certify to SEAA compliance with testing requirements.

Additionally, SEAA must provide the nonpublic schools with funds for the cost of the required nationally standardized tests in 3rd, 8th, and 11th grade. SEAA must report annually by December 1 to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC) on an analysis of the aggregate outcomes of students in grades 3, 8, and 11 as compared to national outcomes on the nationally standardized test.

Superintendent Study and Report – By March 1, 2024, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) must study and report on the following to JLEOC:

- Recommendations for a nationally standardized test for use in 3rd and 8th grade to compare performance between students in nonpublic schools who are receiving Opportunity Scholarships and students attending schools in public school units.
- Alignment between the recommended nationally standardized test and the standard course of study for 3rd and 8th grade.

- Feasibility of developing a through-grade assessment for 3rd and 8th grade that would meet certain criteria.

SEAA must designate the tests recommended by the Superintendent as the nationally standardized assessment to be administered in nonpublic schools for 3rd and 8th grade.

Opportunity Scholarship Grant Fund Reserve – This section makes the following changes related to the Opportunity Scholarship Grant Fund Reserve (Reserve):

- For any fiscal year in which SEAA uses funds from the Reserve, requires SEAA to report certain information to JLEOC and the Fiscal Research Division by April 1.
- Beginning with the 2025-2026 fiscal year, increases statutory appropriations for the Reserve.
- Expands the amount that SEAA can use to contract with one or more nonprofit corporations for outreach and scholarship education and application assistance from \$500,000 to \$1 million.
- Authorizes SEAA to use up to 30% of the unencumbered cash balance in the Reserve if the funds required to award scholarship grants to eligible students for a school year exceed the funds available for distribution of the awards.

This section became effective July 1, 2023, and applies to the application and award of scholarship grants beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

Require a Sequence of Courses for Early High School Graduation and Establish the Early Graduate Scholarship Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.6(k)-(s)

Section 8A.6(k) – (s) of S.L. 2023-134, as amended by Section 2.6 of S.L. 2023-132, requires high school students to be given the opportunity to graduate from high school within three years of entering 9th grade and for those who choose to graduate early, creates a two-semester scholarship to be used at an eligible postsecondary institution.

Graduation from High School in Three Years – This section requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to develop a sequence of courses to allow students to complete the credits required for high school graduation within three years. Local boards of education cannot require additional credits for graduation beyond those mandated by the SBE. Additionally, local boards of education can no longer require high school graduation projects.

Local boards of education must offer a sequence of courses that allow students to graduate in three years and must advise students using this sequence of the availability of early graduate scholarships. Other public schools are authorized, but not required, to offer the three-year sequence of courses.

By May 15, 2025, and May 15, 2026, local boards of education and other public school units offering a three-year graduation sequence must report to the Department of Public Instruction

(DPI) on the number of rising 11th graders utilizing the sequence of courses to complete the credits required for graduation in a three-year period. DPI must report the total numbers to the Fiscal Research Division by June 1, 2025, and June 1, 2026.

The SBE must adopt emergency rules by November 1, 2023, to establish the required graduation requirements and sequence of courses. Students in 10th grade in the 2023-2024 school year who complete the required courses within three years will be eligible to graduate in the 2024-2025 school year.

Early Graduate Scholarship Program – Students are eligible for a two-semester scholarship at an eligible postsecondary institution to be used in the two academic years immediately following graduation from high school if they meet the following requirements:

- Graduate from a North Carolina public high school within three years of entering 9th grade.
- Qualify as a resident for tuition purposes.
- Meet enrollment standards by being admitted, enrolled, and classified as a student in a matriculated status at an eligible postsecondary institution.
- Submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

The amount of the scholarship will be determined annually using a payment schedule developed by the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) based on student financial need as determined by household income in comparison with the eligibility for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program, similar to calculations for Opportunity Scholarships. No scholarship can exceed the cost of attendance at the eligible postsecondary institution where the student is enrolled.

If an eligible student also receives other scholarships or grants, the amount of the early graduate scholarship will be reduced by an appropriate amount determined by the SEAA so that the total amount of scholarships and grants does not exceed the cost of attendance. If there are not sufficient funds to cover each eligible student's full scholarship amount, the SEAA must first award scholarships to students residing in households with an income level not in excess of 200% of the amount required for the student to qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.

SEAA must adopt rules related to the early graduate scholarships, including an application process and schedule, notification and disbursement procedures, and standards for reporting. SEAA must report annually beginning December 1, 2026, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the dollar amount of awards disbursed, the number of eligible students receiving funds, and a breakdown of the eligible postsecondary institutions that received the funds.

This section also creates the Reserve Fund for Early Graduate Scholarships that is made up of the following:

- Funds appropriated by the General Assembly for the Program.

- All interest earned on appropriated funds.

Monies in the Reserve Fund do not revert and remain available until expended. SEAA can use up to 1.5% of the funds available in the Reserve Fund each year for administrative costs.

This section became effective October 3, 2023. The provisions related to the Early Graduate Scholarship program apply to application and award of scholarships beginning with the 2025-2026 academic year.

Longleaf Commitment Community College Grant – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.7

Section 8A.7 of S.L. 2023-134 creates the Longleaf Commitment Grant Program (Program) and directs that funds appropriated to the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina for each year of the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium to be allocated to the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) for the Program. From the Escheat Fund and the General Fund, SEAA must administer the Program for the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium to award grants to eligible students graduating from high school at the end of the 2022-2023 school year to cover tuition and fees at a community college for up to two years. Grants awarded under the Program must be for a minimum amount of \$700.00 per eligible student with a maximum grant of up to \$2,800 per eligible student per year for up to two years, which includes cost of tuition and a fee allowance.

To be eligible to receive a grant under the Program, a student must meet all of the following requirements:

- Graduate from high school during the 2022-2023 school year or receive a high school equivalency diploma during the 2022-2023 school year.
- Qualify as a State resident for tuition purposes.
- Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the 2023-2024 academic year and, if applicable, renew the FAFSA for the 2024-2025 academic year.
- Have an Expected Family Contribution below \$15,000.
- Enroll in the Fall 2023 semester and maintain enrollment in at least six credit hours per semester in curriculum courses at a community college.

SEAA can use up to 1% of the total appropriations for the Program from all funding sources in each fiscal year for administrative costs related to the Program. SEAA must submit the following reports to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee regarding the Program:

- By March 15, 2024, recommendations for a permanent community college grant program that incorporates the goals of the Program established in this section and the Need-Based Scholarship Program for Public Colleges and Universities.
- An initial report by September 1, 2024, and a final report by September 1, 2025, on the implementation of the Program. These reports must contain, for each academic year, the amount of grant funds disbursed and the number of eligible students receiving funds.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Conform State Education Assistance Authority Requirements with Federal Changes to Free Application for Federal Student Aid Simplification Act – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.9

Section 8A.9 of S.L. 2023-134 removes the requirement for individuals to comply with the Selective Service System in order to receive educational assistance from a State agency, including scholarships, loans, and other financial assistance.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2023-2024 academic year.

Conform In-State Tuition for Military-Related Individuals to Federal Law – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.10

Section 8A.10 of S.L. 2023-134 makes technical and conforming changes to the definitions for qualifying federal services members and their spouses and dependents to qualify for in-state tuition rates at North Carolina community colleges and constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina to align with federal definitions.

This section became effective October 3, 2023, and applies beginning with the 2024-2025 academic year.

Allow Preapproval of Personal Education Student Account Expenses in Lieu of Expense Reports, as Recommended by the Internal Auditor – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.11

Section 8A.11 of S.L. 2023-134 requires preapproval of Personal Education Student Account (PESA) qualifying expenses in a process established by the State Education Assistance Authority instead of requiring parents to submit an expense report each semester.

This section became effective October 3, 2023.

Allow Cash Basis Accounting for Schools Participating in the Opportunity Scholarship Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.12

Section 8A.12 of S.L. 2023-134 allows schools participating in the Opportunity Scholarship Program (Program) to contract with a certified public accountant to perform a financial review, consistent with generally accepted methods of accounting principles, or any other comprehensive basis of accounting recognized by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants for each school year in which the school enrolls 70 or more students receiving scholarship grants or scholarship funds under the Program.

This section became effective October 3, 2023.

Personal Education Student Account Unexpended Funds to Establish an Institutional Trust Fund – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.13

Section 8A.13 of S.L. 2023-134 authorizes the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) to place unexpended funds appropriated for the Personal Education Student Accounts (PESA), which provide scholarships for students with disabilities, into an institutional trust fund of up to \$10 million (trust fund). That trust fund will be used to award scholarships to students in any year in which the funds available are exceeded by the number of eligible students.

SEAA is required to report on specific metrics related to the use of the trust fund to award scholarships by April 1 in any fiscal year in which funds are used from the trust fund.

This section became effective June 30, 2023, and applies beginning with awards of scholarships for the 2023-2024 school year.

Primary Care Medicine and Psychiatry Targeted Assistance Program – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.14

Section 8A.14 of S.L. 2023-134 establishes the Primary Care Medicine and Psychiatry Targeted Assistance Program (Program) administered by the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) to provide forgivable loans to address the demand for physicians practicing primary care medicine and psychiatry in rural and other high-need areas of the State. Students enrolled in medical school at an eligible institution of higher education to practice primary care medicine or psychiatry can qualify for loans up to \$25,000 per academic year, up to \$100,000 per student. Loans will be forgiven by the SEAA through service, as follows:

- One year of the loan amount, including any accrued interest, will be forgiven for each year of full-time employment as a licensed physician practicing primary care medicine or psychiatry in a healthcare facility in a tier one or tier two county.
- If the county in which the physician is working is no longer a tier one or tier two county, the physician will still qualify for forgiveness if he or she continues to work at the healthcare facility without a break in service.
- The SEAA can provide for an accelerated repayment option or an option for part-time employment to qualify for forgiveness.

The SEAA, in consultation with the Office of Rural Health at the Department of Health and Human Services, is required to report no later than January 15, 2025, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services on strategies to increase the pipeline of physicians practicing primary care medicine and psychiatry in the State.

This section became effective July 1, 2023, and applies to loans awarded beginning with the 2024-2025 academic year.

Common Digital Transcript – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.15

Section 8A.15 of S.L. 2023-134 requires the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA), in consultation with the Department of Public Instruction, the Community Colleges System Office, and The University of North Carolina System Office, to contract with the College Foundation, Inc., to design, develop, and maintain a common digital transcript for students enrolled in a public school unit, community college, or constituent institution of The University of North Carolina. The transcript must meet at least the following criteria:

- Be available to all students.
- Be secure and confidential.
- Be compatible with data systems used by eligible public education entities.
- Be free of cost to students who are enrolled in or have been enrolled in an eligible public education entity.

By March 15, 2024, SEAA must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the progress made by the College Foundation, Inc., in designing and developing the digital transcript, including at least the following:

- Any additional steps to be taken for this purpose and a timeline for completing those steps and publishing the transcript to students.
- Estimates of additional costs needed to design, develop, and maintain the digital transcript, including operational costs.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Revise Reporting Requirements for the State Education Assistance Authority and the Division of Nonpublic Education – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 8A.16

Section 8A.16 of S.L. 2023-134 revises the date by which the Division of Nonpublic Education (Division) must provide to the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) a list of nonpublic schools, including home schools, operating in the State by December 31 of each year. In addition, the Division must create a unique identifier for each nonpublic school registered with the Division and provide the identifiers to SEAA.

Nonpublic schools that have students that receive Opportunity Scholarships must annually provide to the Division the following information: (i) name and address of the school, including physical location address; (ii) the name of the owners and chief administrator; and (iii) number of students in attendance at the school as of October 1. If a nonpublic school terminates operation during the school's regular schedule and fails to (i) report the date of the closure to the Division within 14 days, and (ii) return funds owed to SEAA in a timely manner for students who received Opportunity Scholarships, any other nonpublic school opened during that school year or subsequent school years by an owner or chief administrator listed in the report submitted to the Division for that closed school is ineligible to receive Opportunity Scholarship funds until such time SEAA determines the obligation to return those funds has been satisfied.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs - Children of Veterans' Scholarships. – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 33.4

Section 33.4 of S.L. 2023-134 makes the following changes to the North Carolina Scholarships for Children of Wartime Veterans Program (Program):

- Requires students who have been awarded scholarships under the Program to maintain a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 throughout the four academic years for which the student is eligible for a scholarship under the Program.
- Directs the Veterans' Affairs Commission (Commission) of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) to require State and private educational institutions to annually report (i) the number of scholarship recipients who maintained a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 under the Program and (ii) the number of scholarship recipients who completed the degree requirements for graduation under the Program.
- Requires DVMA to annually report to various legislative committees the number of scholarship recipients who maintained a cumulative grade point average of 2.0 under the Program.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Capital Improvement and Repairs and Renovations Appropriations – 2023 Appropriations Act.

SL 2023-134 (H259), Sec. 40.1.(v)

Section 40.1.(v) of S.L. 2023-134 directs North Carolina State University to use funds appropriated to conduct a feasibility study concerning establishment of an advanced nuclear research reactor at the University. The study may include the following:

- Assessment of site selection for a reactor.
- Study and analysis of potential environmental impacts.
- Analysis of licensing requirements for a reactor.
- Engineering and construction evaluation of a reactor and associated laboratories, including cost estimates.
- Utilization analysis, including capability development for advanced nuclear power generation in the State.
- Vendor and contractor evaluation.
- Identification of the potential for collaboration with industry, other academic institutions, and State and federal entities.

This section became effective July 1, 2023.

Expansion of the Homeschool Cooperative Exemption to the Definition of Child Care – Regulatory Reform Act of 2023.

SL 2023-137 (H600), Sec. 33

Section 33 of S.L. 2023-137 revises the homeschool cooperative exemption to the definition of "child care" to allow cooperative arrangements to provide for the academic instruction of school age children to occur in a location outside the home of one of the cooperative participants.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on October 2, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on October 10, 2023. This section became effective on October 10, 2023.

Clarify Reservation of Water and Sewer Capacity for Proposed Charter School Facilities – Regulatory Reform Act of 2023.

SL 2023-137 (H600), Sec. 40

Section 40 clarifies that charter schools' eligibility for reservation of sewer capacity is identical to public schools' eligibility for reservation of sewer capacity established in 2021.

This bill was vetoed by the Governor on October 2, 2023, and that veto was overridden by the General Assembly on October 10, 2023. This section became effective on October 10, 2023.