

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 2017

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SENATE BILL 227

Short Title: School Cal. Flex./Certain Systems. (Local)

Sponsors: Senators Britt (Primary Sponsor); and Rabin.

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

March 14, 2017

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FLEXIBILITY TO CERTAIN SCHOOL SYSTEMS IN ADOPTING THE SCHOOL CALENDAR.

Whereas, State law has usurped local control of school calendars by imposing a one-size-fits-all mandate on when the year can begin and end for traditional public schools; and

Whereas, the State-mandated, late-August start date combined with the instructional time requirement means that high schools cannot complete the first semester until mid-January; and

Whereas, completing the first semester in mid-January results in high school students having to take first semester exams after winter break, which can negatively impact their preparation and performance; and

Whereas, the State-mandated, late-August start date puts high school calendars out of alignment with community colleges and four-year universities, which typically begin the first semester in early August and the second semester weeks before high school students complete the fall semester; and

Whereas, superintendents have reported that the calendar misalignment creates barriers for high school students who want to take community college courses and creates challenges for high school students who graduate early; and

Whereas, the late-August start date and mid-June end date squeeze local school administrative units, particularly those in mountain counties, that need to schedule makeup days for inclement weather closings, leaving them no recourse but to schedule makeup days on unpopular days like holidays, Saturdays, or spring break days; and

Whereas, practices and tryouts for interscholastic sports can start as early as August 1, and many student-athletes are required to be available, while some sports, such as football, have already played games before the school year has started, negatively impacting ticket and booster club revenues; and

Whereas, the late-August start date and other requirements of the calendar law make it more difficult for school districts to schedule professional development days during the school year, when it is most beneficial to teachers; and

Whereas, the North Carolina General Statutes give the powers of supervision and control of local school systems to local boards of education; and

Whereas, allowing local boards of education to have additional flexibility with setting a start date for their school calendar will help alleviate the issues delineated above while giving more authority to the locally elected bodies statutorily empowered to govern their school systems;

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:



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1           **SECTION 1.** G.S. 115C-84.2(d) reads as rewritten:

2           "(d) Opening and Closing Dates. – Local boards of education shall determine the dates of  
3 opening and closing the public schools under subdivision (a)(1) of this section. Except for  
4 year-round schools, the opening date for students shall be no earlier than the Monday closest to  
5 August ~~26~~10, and the closing date for students shall be no later than the Friday closest to June 11.  
6 ~~On a showing of good cause, the State Board of Education may waive the requirement that the~~  
7 ~~opening date for students be no earlier than the Monday closest to August 26 and may allow the~~  
8 ~~local board of education to set an opening date no earlier than the Monday closest to August 19, to~~  
9 ~~the extent that school calendars are able to provide sufficient days to accommodate anticipated~~  
10 ~~makeup days due to school closings. A local board may revise the scheduled closing date if~~  
11 necessary in order to comply with the minimum requirements for instructional days or  
12 instructional time. ~~For purposes of this subsection, the term "good cause" means that schools in~~  
13 ~~any local school administrative unit in a county have been closed eight days per year during any~~  
14 ~~four of the last 10 years because of severe weather conditions, energy shortages, power failures, or~~  
15 ~~other emergency situations.~~

16           The required opening and closing dates under this subsection shall not apply to any school that  
17 a local board designated as having a modified calendar for the 2003-2004 school year or to any  
18 school that was part of a planned program in the 2003-2004 school year for a system of modified  
19 calendar schools, so long as the school operates under a modified calendar."

20           **SECTION 2.** G.S. 115C-174.12(a)(4) reads as rewritten:

21           "(4) All annual assessments of student achievement adopted by the State Board of  
22 Education pursuant to G.S. 115C-174.11(c)(1) and (3) and all final exams for  
23 courses shall be administered within the final 10 instructional days of the  
24 school year for year-long courses and within the final five instructional days of  
25 the semester for semester courses. Exceptions shall be permitted to  
26 accommodate a student's individualized education program and section 504 (29  
27 U.S.C. § 794) plans and for the administration of final exams for courses with  
28 national or international curricula required to be held at designated times. A  
29 local board of education that has implemented a school calendar that concludes  
30 the fall semester prior to December 31 shall be permitted to administer  
31 assessments prior to the conclusion of that semester."

32           **SECTION 3.** This act applies only to Columbus County Schools, Robeson County  
33 Schools, and Whiteville City Schools.

34           **SECTION 4.** This act is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the  
35 2017-2018 school year.