

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1997

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HOUSE BILL 550

Short Title: Minority and At-Risk Student/Study.

(Public)

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Sponsors: Representatives Wright; Adams, Blue, Bonner, Boyd-McIntyre, Braswell, Cunningham, Earle, Fitch, Goodwin, Hardaway, H. Hunter, Kinney, McAllister, Michaux, Moore, Oldham, Smith, Wainwright, and Womble.

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Referred to: Rules, Calendar and Operations of the House.

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March 19, 1997

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE COMMISSION ON IMPROVING THE ACADEMIC  
2 ACHIEVEMENT OF MINORITY AND AT-RISK STUDENTS.

3 Whereas, minority and at-risk students, disproportionately represent a  
4 significant portion of the public school population who are not achieving academically;  
5 and  
6

7 Whereas, the lack of educational achievement is demonstrated by the poor  
8 performance of minority and at-risk students as a whole on State-administered end-of-  
9 grade, end-of-course, and competency tests; and

10 Whereas, the reported discipline rate for minority and at-risk students is high,  
11 when compared to other students; and

12 Whereas, the dropout rate for minority and at-risk students is high; and

13 Whereas, the State Board of Education and the Department of Public  
14 Instruction recognize that there is a significant problem with schools meeting the  
15 education needs of minority and at-risk students; and

16 Whereas, it is acknowledged that the failure of minority and at-risk students to  
17 achieve educationally is a significant factor when addressing the economic and social

1 burden that is experienced by the correctional and social service agencies in North  
2 Carolina; and

3       Whereas, the General Assembly recognizes that in order to be competitive as a  
4 State in the twenty-first century, all students must achieve educational proficiency in a  
5 rapidly changing, technological, educational environment; and

6       Whereas, it is in the best interest of the North Carolina citizenry that a  
7 coordinated strategy be developed for implementing measures designed to yield  
8 substantial improvements in the educational achievement of minority and at-risk students;  
9 and

10       Whereas, a commission is required to effectively research, review, and make  
11 recommendations to improve achievement of minority and at-risk students; Now,  
12 therefore,

13 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

14       Section 1. (a) The Commission on Improving the Academic Achievement of  
15 Minority And At-Risk Students is created. The Commission shall consist of 16 members,  
16 as follows:

- 17       (1) Five Senators and three public members appointed by the President Pro  
18       Tempore of the Senate;
- 19       (2) Five Representatives and three public members appointed by the  
20       Speaker of the House of Representatives; and
- 21       (3) Six public members appointed by the Governor, who represent groups  
22       or individuals with knowledge and experience in advocating, educating,  
23       or assisting minority and at-risk students achieve, at least one of whom  
24       is a representative of a nonprofit organization that advocates on behalf  
25       of minority and at-risk students.

26 In making appointments to the Commission, the appointing officers shall ensure that  
27 African-American members have significant representation on the Commission.

28       (b) Initial appointments to the Commission shall be made before September  
29 15, 1997. The first meeting of the Commission shall be held no later than October 13,  
30 1997.

31       Section 2. The President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall designate one  
32 Senator as cochair and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate one  
33 Representative as cochair.

34       Section 3. The Commission shall be authorized to:

- 35       (1) Gather accurate and reliable data and research information pertaining to  
36       the status of minority and at-risk students in the North Carolina public  
37       education system;
- 38       (2) Identify and visit education programs and other efforts within and  
39       outside North Carolina that appear to be successful yielding significant  
40       positive results for minority and at-risk students;
- 41       (3) Consult with higher education faculty members and other persons who  
42       have been engaged in extensive research and observation related to

- 1                   these issues, and encourage their direct involvement in the activities of  
2                   the Commission;
- 3           (4)       Conduct hearings throughout the State for the purpose of obtaining  
4                   meaningful information regarding successful education programs and  
5                   efforts related to these concerns;
- 6           (5)       Identify, consult, and meet with representatives of national, regional,  
7                   and State-level organizations and agencies that could be particularly  
8                   helpful in addressing these concerns;
- 9           (6)       Devise recommendations as to steps that should be taken to address  
10                   these concerns – steps to be taken separately and collectively by:
- 11                   a.       State government;
- 12                   b.       Local government;
- 13                   c.       Public schools and higher education institutions;
- 14                   d.       Nonprofit organizations, including community-based  
15                   organizations, with a particular emphasis on those with direct ties  
16                   to families of these children and youth;
- 17                   e.       Foundations;
- 18                   f.       Religious institutes;
- 19                   g.       Civic organizations;
- 20                   h.       Business and industry; and
- 21                   i.       Other entities; and
- 22           (7)       Determine the extent and categories of fiscal and human resources  
23                   needed to address the identified concerns.

24           Section 4. In the study, particular emphasis should be placed on programs and  
25           efforts that have been successful in imparting:

- 26                   (1)       Improved educational achievement;
- 27                   (2)       Reduction of school discipline and behavioral problems;
- 28                   (3)       Reduction of minority and at-risk student dropout rates; and
- 29                   (4)       Improved relations between parents, schools, and students.

30           Section 5. The Commission shall make an interim report of its findings and  
31           recommendations to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the  
32           House of Representatives on or before the first day of the 1998 Regular Session of the  
33           1997 General Assembly. The Commission shall submit a final report of its findings and  
34           recommendations to the General Assembly on or before the first day of the 1999 Session  
35           by filing the report with the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the  
36           House of Representatives. Upon filing its final report, the Commission shall terminate.

37           Section 6. The Commission, while in the discharge of official duties, may  
38           exercise all the powers provided under the provisions of G.S. 120-19, and G.S. 120-19.1  
39           through G.S. 120-19.4. The Commission may meet in the Legislative Building or the  
40           Legislative Office Building.

41           Section 7. Members of the Commission shall receive subsistence and travel  
42           expenses at the rates set forth in G.S. 120-3.1.

1           Section 8. The Commission may contract for professional, clerical, or  
2 consultant services as provided by G.S. 120-32.02. The Legislative Administrative  
3 Officer shall assign professional staff to assist in the work of the Commission. The  
4 House of Representatives' and the Senate's Supervisors of Clerks shall assign clerical  
5 staff to the Commission, upon the direction of the Legislative Services Commission. The  
6 expenses relating to the employees shall be borne by the Commission.

7           Section 9. When a vacancy occurs in the membership of the Commission, the  
8 vacancy shall be filled by the same appointing officer who made the initial appointment.

9           Section 10. All State departments and agencies and local governments and  
10 their subdivisions shall furnish the Commission with information in their possession or  
11 available to them.

12           Section 11. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the General  
13 Assembly the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) for the 1997-98 fiscal  
14 year and the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) for the 1998-99 fiscal year  
15 for the expenses of the Commission.

16           Section 12. This act becomes effective July 1, 1997.