

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

SESSION 1999

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SENATE BILL 943*

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

(Public)

Sponsors: Senators Martin of Guilford; Albertson, Ballance, Clodfelter, Cooper, Dannelly, Gulley, Hoyle, Kerr, Lee, Martin of Pitt, Perdue, Rand, Warren, and Wellons.

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate.

April 14, 1999

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

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

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

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

Whereas, there is a significant gap in academic achievement between minority and at-risk students and majority students; and

Whereas, the achievement gap between student groups has not been significantly closed or narrowed in the past decade despite an overall increase in student achievement in North Carolina; and

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

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

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

Whereas, it is acknowledged that the failure of minority and at-risk students to achieve educationally is a significant factor when addressing the economic and social burden that is experienced by the correctional and social service agencies in North Carolina; and

Whereas, the General Assembly recognizes that in order to be competitive as a State in the 21st century, all students must achieve educational proficiency in a rapidly changing technological, educational environment; and

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

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

1 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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

5 (1) Five senators and three public members appointed by the President Pro
6 Tempore of the Senate;

7 (2) Five representatives and three public members appointed by the Speaker
8 of the House of Representatives; and

9 (3) Six public members appointed by the Governor, who represent groups
10 or individuals with knowledge and experience in advocating, educating,
11 or assisting minority and at-risk students to achieve, at least one of
12 whom is a representative of a statewide nonprofit education advocacy
13 organization that advocates on behalf of minority and at-risk students
14 and at least one of whom is a representative of a statewide organization
15 that represents the interests of African-Americans.

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

18 Section 1.(b) Initial appointments to the Commission shall be made before
19 September 15, 1999. The first meeting of the Commission shall be held no later than
20 October 15, 1999.

21 Section 2. The President Pro Tempore of the Senate shall designate one
22 senator as cochair and the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall designate one
23 representative as cochair.

24 Section 3. The Commission shall be authorized to:

25 (1) Gather accurate and reliable data and research information pertaining to
26 the status of minority and at-risk students in the North Carolina public
27 education system;

28 (2) Identify and visit education programs and other efforts within and
29 outside North Carolina that appear to be successful yielding significant
30 positive results for minority and at-risk students;

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

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

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

32 Section 5. The Commission shall make an interim report of its findings and
33 recommendations to the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the
34 House of Representatives on or before the first day of the 2000 Regular Session of the
35 1999 General Assembly. The Commission shall submit a final report of its findings and
36 recommendations to the General Assembly on or before the first day of the 2001 Session
37 by filing the report with the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the
38 House of Representatives. Upon filing its final report, the Commission shall terminate.

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

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

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

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

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

14 Section 11. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the General
15 Assembly the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) for the 1999-2000 fiscal
16 year and the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) for the 2000-2001 fiscal
17 year for the expenses of the Commission.

18 Section 12. This act becomes effective July 1, 1999.