

State of Arkansas
91st General Assembly
Regular Session, 2017

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1902

By: Representative Bentley
By: Senator G. Stubblefield

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT CONCERNING AGRICULTURAL SCHOOLS; TO ALLOW A PUBLIC CHARTER AUTHORIZER TO DESIGNATE A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AS A SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURAL STUDIES; TO REPEAL THE KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE TWELVE (K-12) AGRICULTURE SCHOOL PILOT PROGRAM; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

CONCERNING AGRICULTURAL SCHOOLS; TO ALLOW A PUBLIC CHARTER AUTHORIZER TO DESIGNATE A PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AS A SCHOOL FOR AGRICULTURAL STUDIES; AND TO REPEAL THE K-12 AGRICULTURE SCHOOL PILOT PROGRAM.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Uncodified Acts 2015, No. 1286, § 1, is repealed.

~~(a) The General Assembly finds that:~~

~~(1) Agriculture is the backbone of the state's economy;~~

~~(2) Twenty seven (27) out of every one hundred (100) jobs in Arkansas are agriculture related;~~

~~(3) Arkansas is the number one (1) rice producing state in the nation, growing fifty percent (50%) of the nation's rice and adding more than six billion dollars (\$6,000,000,000) to the state's economy each year;~~

~~(4) Arkansas is the number two (2) soybean producing state in the United States, adding more than two billion dollars (\$2,000,000,000) to~~



~~the state's economy each year;~~

~~(5) Arkansas ranks in the top ten (10) poultry producing and egg producing states in the nation;~~

~~(6) Forest products added over three billion dollars (\$3,000,000,000) to the state's economy in 2012, supporting nearly twenty-five thousand (25,000) jobs;~~

~~(7) Just under half of our state's population live in rural communities;~~

~~(8) Although agriculture is the largest business in our state, Arkansas has not been at the forefront of integrating agriculture based education initiatives in our education system;~~

~~(9) Innovations in technology and equipment have transformed the agriculture industry, leaving businesses struggling to find qualified individuals to fill open positions; and~~

~~(10) Creating kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) agriculture schools across the state will provide deliberate, focused instruction that will address the needs of the state's agriculture-based economy.~~

~~(b)(1) The Department of Career Education, in collaboration with the Department of Education, shall develop, administer, and oversee the Kindergarten through Grade Twelve (K-12) Agriculture School Pilot Program.~~

~~(2) An agriculture school that is part of the pilot program shall be governed by a single seven (7) member board of directors of agriculture schools appointed by the Governor.~~

~~(3) An agriculture school in the pilot program shall have a seven (7) member advisory board comprised of representatives from the:~~

- ~~(A) Local agriculture business community;~~
- ~~(B) Institutions of higher education;~~
- ~~(C) Department of Agriculture;~~
- ~~(D) Department of Career Education; and~~
- ~~(E) Department of Education.~~

~~(c)(1) To encourage small rural communities to participate in the pilot program, § 6-13-1501(a)(2) and § 6-13-1502 shall not apply to an agriculture school that is part of the pilot program.~~

~~(2) All other laws and rules applicable to a public school are applicable to an agriculture school unless specifically exempted under this~~

chapter.

~~(d) The pilot program shall provide for:~~

~~(1) A mayor of a municipality, a county judge, or board of directors of a school district to apply for an agriculture school;~~

~~(2) A partnership with an institution of higher education to expand program offerings and provide opportunities for dual enrollment and concurrent credit, including industry-based certifications upon graduation from an agriculture high school;~~

~~(3) Students to transfer from other school districts to an agriculture school;~~

~~(4) At least one (1) agriculture school for grades seven through twelve (7-12) for the 2015-2016 school year;~~

~~(5) At least one (1) agriculture school for grades kindergarten through grade six (K-6) during the 2016-2017 school year; and~~

~~(6) An agriculture school to focus on the type of agricultural industry in the local region.~~

~~(e) An agriculture school opened as a part of the Kindergarten through Grade Twelve (K-12) Agriculture School Pilot Program may receive funding from the public school fund and other sources as allowed by law.~~

~~(f) The Department of Career Education, in collaboration with the Department of Education, shall adopt rules to administer the Kindergarten through Grade Twelve Agriculture Pilot Program, including without limitation, rules that address:~~

~~(1) Applications;~~

~~(2) Administration; and~~

~~(3) Reporting requirements.~~

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 23, Subchapter 1, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

6-23-108. School for Agricultural Studies.

(a) The authorizer may designate a public charter school as a School for Agricultural Studies.

(b) To be designated as a School for Agricultural Studies, the applicant must include in its original application or charter amendment request:

(1) A request to be designated as a School for Agricultural

Studies;

(2) The school's agricultural studies plan, which shall include without limitation:

(A) The type of agricultural industry in the school's local region;

(B) How the school will address the needs of that industry and the state's agricultural-based economy; and

(C) Anticipated support from the agricultural industry;
and

(3) A written review of the agricultural studies plan from the Department of Career Education.

(c)(1) A School for Agricultural Studies may petition the State Board of Education for creation of a new school district by detachment under § 6-13-1501 et seq. if the School for Agricultural Studies meets the conditions of this subsection.

(2) To be eligible to petition for detachment, the school shall:

(A) Complete three (3) academic years serving students as a School for Agricultural Studies;

(B) Not currently be classified in academic distress, fiscal distress, or facilities distress;

(C) Not be in probationary status for violation of the Standards for Accreditation of Arkansas Public Schools and School Districts;
and

(D) Show evidence that the school is meeting its stated goals.

(3) A School for Agricultural Studies:

(A) Is exempt from the minimum student enrollment and square mileage requirements under § 6-13-1501(a)(2) and § 6-13-1502; and

(B) Shall not be approved to create a new school district by detachment with fewer than three hundred fifty (350) students as determined by a feasibility study included with the petition.

(d)(1) Nothing in this section prohibits a public charter school from offering agricultural programming without the designation as a School for Agricultural Studies.

(2) A public charter school shall not refer to itself as a School for Agricultural Studies unless it is designated as a School for

Agricultural Studies under this section.

APPROVED: 03/29/2017