

State of Arkansas
94th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2023

A Bill

SENATE BILL 505

By: Senator K. Hammer
By: Representative Cozart

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MEANS BY WHICH A PUBLIC SCHOOL MAY AWARD A STUDENT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA BEFORE THE STUDENT GRADUATES UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES; TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO ESTABLISH A MEANS BY WHICH A PUBLIC SCHOOL MAY AWARD A STUDENT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA BEFORE THE STUDENT GRADUATES UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES; AND TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY.

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

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 16, Subchapter 1, is amended to add an additional section to read as follows:

6-16-161. Conditions under which an early diploma may be awarded.

(a) A public school or an open-enrollment public charter school may award a student enrolled in the public school or open-enrollment public charter school a high school diploma before the established graduation date if:

(1) The student enrolled in the public school or open-enrollment public charter school is:

(A) Terminally ill; and

(B) In his or her final semester of high school at the public school or open-enrollment public charter school; and



(2) The board of directors or governing body of the public school or open-enrollment public charter school in which the student is enrolled has approved the provision of an early high school diploma to the student.

(b)(1) As used in this section, "terminally ill" means, as determined by a licensed medical professional, the student:

(A) Has an incurable condition caused by illness or disease; and

(B) Will likely die before the date of his or her graduation due to the illness or disease.

(2) "Terminally ill" may include a student's admittance into hospice due to his or her incurable condition caused by an illness or disease.

SECTION 2. EMERGENCY CLAUSE. It is found and determined by the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas that graduation dates for the class of 2023 are imminent; that students who are terminally ill as defined by this act will likely meet the conditions for an early high school diploma to be awarded; that the ability of affected students within the 2023 graduation class to avail themselves of the benefits of this act before their upcoming graduation date directly impacts their personal mental and physical health and welfare, and thus requires this act to become immediately effective; and that this act is immediately necessary due to the volatile nature of the conditions that qualify students for the awarding of an early high school diploma as permissible by this act. Therefore, an emergency is declared to exist, and this act being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health, and safety shall become effective on:

(1) The date of its approval by the Governor;

(2) If the bill is neither approved nor vetoed by the Governor, the expiration of the period of time during which the Governor may veto the bill; or

(3) If the bill is vetoed by the Governor and the veto is overridden, the date the last house overrides the veto.

APPROVED: 4/11/23