

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 596

Short Title: Standards Advisory Commission. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Torbett and Blackwell (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

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

April 1, 2025

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO CREATE THE STANDARD COURSE OF STUDY ADVISORY COMMISSION
3 TO RECOMMEND ACADEMIC STANDARDS TO THE STATE BOARD OF
4 EDUCATION FOR APPROVAL.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 **SECTION 1.(a)** G.S. 115C-12(9c) reads as rewritten:

7 "(9c) Power to Develop Content Standards. – The Board shall adopt the standard
8 course of study as provided in Part 1 of Article 8 of this Chapter.

9 a. ~~The Board shall develop a comprehensive plan to revise content~~
10 ~~standards and the standard course of study in the core academic areas~~
11 ~~of reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, geography, and~~
12 ~~civics. The Board shall involve and survey a representative sample of~~
13 ~~parents, teachers, and the public to help determine academic content~~
14 ~~standard priorities and usefulness of the content standards. A full~~
15 ~~review of available and relevant academic content standards that are~~
16 ~~rigorous, specific, sequenced, clear, focused, and measurable,~~
17 ~~whenever possible, shall be a part of the process of the development~~
18 ~~of content standards. The revised content standards developed in the~~
19 ~~core academic areas shall (i) reflect high expectations for students and~~
20 ~~an in-depth mastery of the content; (ii) be clearly grounded in the~~
21 ~~content of each academic area; (iii) be defined grade by grade and~~
22 ~~course by course; (iv) be understandable to parents and teachers; (v)~~
23 ~~be developed in full recognition of the time available to teach the core~~
24 ~~academic areas at each grade level; and (vi) be measurable, whenever~~
25 ~~possible, in a reliable, valid, and efficient manner for accountability~~
26 ~~purposes.~~

27 b. ~~High school course content standards shall include the knowledge and~~
28 ~~skills necessary to pursue further postsecondary education or to attain~~
29 ~~employment in the 21st century economy. The high school course~~
30 ~~content standards also shall be aligned with the minimum~~
31 ~~undergraduate course requirements for admission to the constituent~~
32 ~~institutions of The University of North Carolina.~~

33 c. ~~The Board also shall develop and implement an ongoing process to~~
34 ~~align State programs and support materials with the revised academic~~
35 ~~content standards for each core academic area on a regular basis.~~



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~~Alignment shall include revising textbook criteria, support materials, State tests, teacher and school administrator preparation, and ongoing professional development programs to be compatible with content standards. The Board shall develop and make available to teachers and parents support materials, including teacher and parent guides, for academic content standards. The State Board of Education shall work in collaboration with the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina to ensure that teacher and school administrator degree programs, ongoing professional development, and other university activity in the State's public schools align with the State Board's priorities."~~

SECTION 1.(b) G.S. 115C-81.5 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C-81.5. Standard course of study.

(a) All children can learn. It is the intent of the General Assembly that the mission of the public school community is to challenge with high expectations each child to learn, to achieve, and to fulfill his or her potential. With that mission as its guide, the State Board of Education shall adopt a plan of education and a standard course of study as provided in ~~G.S. 115C-12(9e)~~ this Part for the public schools of the State. It is the intent of the General Assembly that the focus of State educational funding shall be to ensure that each student receives a sound basic education. It is further a goal of the General Assembly to provide supplemental funds to low-wealth counties to allow those counties to enhance the instructional program and student achievement. Instruction shall be offered in the areas of arts, communication skills, physical education and personal health and safety, mathematics, media and computer skills, science, second languages, social studies, and career and technical education. In addition, instruction shall be offered in all of the areas provided in this Part.

(b) The standard course of study shall provide all of the following:

- (1) A core curriculum for all students that takes into account the special needs of children.
- (2) A set of competencies, by grade level, for each curriculum area.
- (3) A list of textbooks for use in providing the curriculum.
- (4) Standards for student performance and promotion based on the mastery of competencies, including standards for graduation, that take into account children with disabilities and, in particular, include appropriate modifications.
- (5) A program of remedial education.
- (6) Required support programs.
- (7) A definition of the instructional day.
- (8) Class size recommendations and requirements.
- (9) Prescribed staffing allotment ratios.
- (10) Material and equipment allotment ratios.
- (11) Facilities guidelines that reflect educational program appropriateness, long-term cost efficiency, and safety considerations.
- (12) Any other information the Board considers appropriate and necessary."

SECTION 1.(c) Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C-81.6. SCOS Commission.

(a) There is established the Standard Course of Study Advisory Commission, hereinafter referred to as the SCOS Commission. The purpose of the Commission is to involve stakeholders in establishing the standard course of study. The Commission shall make recommendations regarding all aspects of the standards and competencies of the standard course of study.

(b) The Commission shall be located administratively in the Department of Public Instruction but shall exercise all of its powers and duties independently of the Department of Public Instruction.

(c) The Commission shall consist of the following members:

(1) The General Assembly, upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, shall appoint the following six members:

- a. One superintendent of a public school unit with a student population greater than 20,000 at the time of appointment.
- b. One principal of an elementary school.
- c. One high school teacher.
- d. One elementary school teacher.
- e. One parent of a student in middle or high school enrolled in a public school unit at the time of appointment.
- f. One curriculum specialist from a public school unit with a student population of 20,000 or less at the time of appointment.

(2) The General Assembly, upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, shall appoint the following six members:

- a. One superintendent of a public school unit with a student population of 20,000 or less at the time of appointment.
- b. One principal of a high school.
- c. One principal of a middle school.
- d. One middle school teacher.
- e. One parent of a student in elementary school enrolled in a public school unit at the time of appointment.
- f. One curriculum specialist from a public school unit with a student population greater than 20,000 at the time of appointment.

(3) The Governor shall appoint the following six members:

- a. Two members of the business community.
- b. Four at-large members.

(4) The Superintendent of Public Instruction or his or her designee.

(5) The President of the North Carolina Community College System, or the President's designee, as a nonvoting member.

(6) The President of The University of North Carolina, or the President's designee, as a nonvoting member.

(7) The President of the North Carolina Chamber, or the President's designee, as a nonvoting member.

(d) In making appointments to the Commission, appointing authorities are encouraged to select qualified citizens who are committed to improving the standard course of study and student achievement and who represent the racial, geographic, and gender diversity of the State. Vacancies in the membership shall be filled for the remainder of the term of office by the appointing authority using the same criteria as provided in subsection (c) of this section. Vacancies in membership appointed by the General Assembly shall be filled as provided in G.S. 120-122.

(e) Members of the Commission shall serve four-year terms of office beginning on July 1. No appointed member shall serve more than eight consecutive years.

(f) The Commission shall elect a chair, a vice-chair, and a secretary from among its membership. In the absence of the chair, the vice-chair shall preside over the Commission's meetings. All members are voting members, and a majority of the Commission constitutes a quorum. The Commission shall adopt rules to govern its proceedings.

(g) Meetings of the Commission shall be held upon the call of the chair or the vice-chair in the absence of the chair. The Superintendent shall call the initial meeting of the Commission.

(h) Members of the Commission shall receive compensation for their services and reimbursement for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties required by this Article at the rate prescribed in G.S. 138-5 and G.S. 138-6.

(i) The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall assign staff to assist the Commission's work. The Commission may contract with content area experts to assist in its deliberations from funds available.

(j) The Commission shall:

(1) Develop and recommend to the State Board of Education the standard course of study in accordance with G.S. 115C-81.7.

(2) Develop support materials, including teacher and parent guides, for academic content standards that can be made available to teachers and parents upon approval by the State Board.

(3) Provide recommendations as requested to the State Board of Education related to alignment of State programs and support materials with the revised academic content standards for each core academic area, including revising textbook criteria, support materials, State tests, teacher and school administrator preparation, and ongoing professional development programs to be compatible with content standards.

(k) The Commission shall submit its recommendations under subsection (j) of this section to the State Board. The State Board shall adopt or reject the recommended standard course of study. The State Board shall not make any substantive changes to any recommended standard course of study that it adopts. If the State Board rejects the recommendation, it shall state with specificity its reasons for rejection; the Commission may then amend the recommendation and resubmit it to the State Board. The State Board shall adopt or reject the amended recommendation.

(l) If the State Board fails to adopt the Commission's original and amended recommendations as provided in subsection (k) of this section, the State Board may develop and adopt its own recommended standard course of study, subject to the requirements of G.S. 115C-81.8.

(m) The Commission shall submit a report by December 1, 2026, and annually thereafter, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the State Board of Education of its activities during the preceding year, together with any recommendations and findings regarding the process for revisions to the standard course of study."

SECTION 1.(d) Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C-81.7. Development of standard course of study.

(a) The State Board shall develop a comprehensive plan to revise, on a regular basis, content standards and the standard course of study in the core academic areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, history, geography, and civics that clearly designates by year the subjects for review by the Commission. The State Board shall provide this plan to the Commission. The Commission shall review the designated subjects and standard course of study in accordance with the plan developed by the State Board.

(b) The Commission shall involve and survey a representative sample of parents, teachers, and the public to help determine academic content standard priorities and usefulness of the content standards. A full review of available and relevant academic content standards that are rigorous, specific, sequenced, clear, focused, and measurable, whenever possible, shall be a part of the process of the development of content standards. The revised content standards developed in the core academic areas shall do all of the following:

(1) Reflect high expectations for students and an in-depth mastery of the content.

(2) Be clearly grounded in the content of each academic area.

(3) Be defined grade-by-grade and course-by-course.

(4) Be understandable to parents and teachers.

(5) Be developed in full recognition of the time available to teach the core academic areas at each grade level.

(6) Be measurable, whenever possible, in a reliable, valid, and efficient manner for accountability purposes.

(c) High school course content standards shall include the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue further postsecondary education or to attain employment in the twenty-first century economy. The high school course content standards also shall be aligned with the minimum undergraduate course requirements for admission to the constituent institutions of The University of North Carolina.

(d) The State Board, in consultation with the Commission, shall also develop and implement an ongoing process to align State programs and support materials with the revised academic content standards for each core academic area on a regular basis. Alignment shall include revising textbook criteria, support materials, State tests, teacher and school administrator preparation, and ongoing professional development programs to be compatible with content standards.

(e) The State Board shall work in collaboration with the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina to ensure that teacher and school administrator degree programs, ongoing professional development, and other university activity in the State's public schools align with the State Board's priorities."

SECTION 1.(e) Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C-81.8. Review of standard course of study developed by State Board.

(a) Prior to implementation of a standard or competency of the standard course of study adopted as provided in G.S. 115C-81.6(I), the State Board of Education shall submit a report of the proposed changes to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. The report shall contain the following:

(1) A copy of the existing standard or competency of the standard course of study in a format that includes page and line numbers for the text with the material struck through that is being deleted and the material underlined that is being added.

(2) An explanation of the reasons for the changes.

(3) A copy of the minutes of each State Board meeting where the proposed changes were discussed.

(b) A change to a standard, competency, or content of the standard course of study that has been submitted to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee may be implemented as follows:

(1) Except as provided in subdivision (2) of this subsection, a change may be implemented following the thirty-first legislative day after the date the State Board submits the change to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee.

(2) If a bill that specifically disapproves the change is introduced in either house of the General Assembly by the thirty-first legislative day following the submission of a change to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, the change becomes effective on the earlier of (i) the day an unfavorable final action is taken on the bill or (ii) the day that session of the General Assembly adjourns without ratifying a bill that specifically disapproves the rule.

(3) A change that is specifically disapproved by a bill enacted into law before it becomes effective shall not be implemented. A bill specifically disapproves a change if it contains a provision that refers to the report submitted to the Joint

1 Legislative Education Oversight Committee by title and date and the specific
2 change by page and line number in the report that is disapproved.
3 Notwithstanding any rule of either house of the General Assembly, any
4 member of the General Assembly may introduce a bill at any time during any
5 regular session to disapprove a change that has been submitted to the Joint
6 Legislative Education Oversight Committee that has not become effective."

7 **SECTION 1.(f)** G.S. 150B-1(d) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

8 "(34) The State Board of Education with respect to adoption of the standard course
9 of study as required by Part 1 of Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General
10 Statutes."

11 **SECTION 1.(g)** Initial appointments to the Standard Course of Study Advisory
12 Commission shall be made by the General Assembly for terms beginning July 1, 2025, and shall
13 be appointed as follows:

14 (1) Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-81.6, as enacted by this act, members appointed
15 pursuant to G.S. 115C-81.6(c)(1)a., c., e., and g. and G.S. 115C-81.6(c)(2)b.,
16 d., f., and h. shall be appointed for two-year terms, and four-year terms
17 thereafter.

18 (2) Members appointed pursuant to G.S. 115C-81.6(c)(1)b., d., f., and h. and
19 G.S. 115C-81.6(c)(2)a., c., e., and g. shall be appointed for four-year terms.

20 **SECTION 1.(h)** Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-81.7(a), the Standard Course of Study
21 Advisory Commission shall review the social studies standard course of study during the
22 2025-2026 school year and provide recommendations to the State Board of Education no later
23 than January 1, 2026.

24 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law and applies to all standard
25 courses of study implemented on or after that date.