**A** **BILL**

TO REVOKE THE FISCAL AUTONOMY OF LAURENS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS 55 AND 56, AND TO REVISE THE MANNER IN WHICH THE ANNUAL BUDGETS FOR LAURENS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS 55 AND 56 ARE PREPARED AND APPROVED.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. (A) Notwithstanding another provision of law, beginning with the budget for the 2018‑2019 school year, the budgets for Laurens County School Districts 55 and 56 must be determined in the following manner:

(1) The board of trustees of each district shall initially prepare the budget after consultation with the various school officials of the county. Consideration must be given to the overall needs of the district school system and the sources of revenue available, including federal, state, and local revenue to fund the budget. The board of trustees of each district shall hold a public hearing before submitting its budget to the county governing body for approval. The notices of the public hearing must be placed in a newspaper of general circulation in the district at least fifteen days before the public hearing.

(2) Each district’s board of trustees must submit its respective proposed budget to the governing body of Laurens County for approval by April first, and the governing body may increase or decrease the budget of either district as it deems necessary and proper.

(3) In a year in which either school district board of trustees determines that greater local financial assessment is essential and that the tax millage of the district should be increased in order to implement the budget, the appropriate board of trustees first must notify the governing body of Laurens County of the amount required and the tax levy necessary to realize that amount, and the governing body, if it approves, shall provide for the necessary tax levy.

(4) The board of trustees of each school district shall establish in its bookkeeping system entries for each item in the budget and shall maintain its records in a manner to reflect accurately the amounts appropriated, the amounts drawn, and the balance remaining in each account. Expenditures for budgeted items may not exceed the amount appropriated, and expenditures for unbudgeted items may not be made unless approved in writing by a majority of the appropriate school district board of trustees.

(B) For purposes of determining the previous year’s millage, the millage levy for each district must be determined and calculated by the Department of Revenue based on the 2017 levy of Laurens County School Districts 55 and 56 and the value of a mill in each district. Beginning in 2018, the amount levied by way of millage is subject to millage limitations provided by general law and local law, and any increase over the 2017 millage as computed above must be approved by the governing body of Laurens County.

SECTION 2. Any provision of a local act pertaining to a school district of Laurens County inconsistent with the provisions of this act is repealed as of July 1, 2018, because the General Assembly’s intent is to have this act and the general law constitute the only provisions of law governing the preparation and approval of the annual budgets for Laurens County School Districts 55 and 56.

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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