**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 59‑39‑100, AS AMENDED, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO ISSUANCE OF UNIFORM DIPLOMAS, SO AS TO REQUIRE THE ADVICE AND CONSENT OF THE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE WITH REGARD TO THE NUMBER OF UNITS REQUIRED FOR A DIPLOMA; TO AMEND THE UNITS REQUIRED IN MATHEMATICS, SCIENCE, FOREIGN LANGUAGE, AND CAREER TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION; TO ELIMINATE THE TWENTY‑FOUR UNIT DIPLOMA; TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ADOPT RULES AND REGULATIONS NECESSARY TO EFFECTUATE A MODIFIED DIPLOMA FOR CERTAIN STUDENTS; TO PROVIDE FOR ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THAT MODIFIED DIPLOMA; TO PROVIDE WHAT UNITS A STUDENT MUST COMPLETE TO EARN A MODIFIED DIPLOMA; TO PROVIDE THAT STUDENTS PURSUING A MODIFIED DIPLOMA MAY REMAIN IN SCHOOL UNTIL THEY ARE TWENTY‑ONE; TO REQUIRE THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ADOPT NECESSARY CURRICULA AND ASSESSMENTS; AND TO REQUIRE THE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT A TRIENNIAL REVIEW OF THE MODIFIED DIPLOMA PROGRAM.

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

SECTION 1. Section 59‑39‑100 of the 1976 Code, as last amended by Act 49 of 2005, is further amended to read:

“Section 59‑39‑100. (A) Diplomas issued to graduates of accredited high schools within this State must be uniform in every respect ~~and~~, particularly as to color, size, lettering, and marking. The number of units required for a state high school diploma is twenty units as prescribed by the State Board of Education by regulations, with advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee that the accountability provisions provided in Sections 59‑18‑300 and 59‑18‑320 are satisfied. ~~Beginning in the 1986‑87 academic year,~~ A minimum of ~~three~~ four units must be earned in mathematics ~~and~~, a minimum of ~~two~~ three units must be earned in science, and a minimum of one unit must be earned in foreign language or career technology education.

(B) One unit in computer science, including keyboarding, if approved by the State Department of Education for this purpose, may be counted toward the mathematics requirement.

(C) Students who earn one unit in science and six or more units in a specific occupational service area ~~will~~ meet the science requirements for a state high school diploma. Career and technology programs operating on a 3‑2‑1 structure may count ~~pre‑career~~ precareer and technology education as one of the six required units.

(D) ~~Beginning with the ninth grade class of school year 1997‑98, the number of units required for a high school diploma is twenty‑four units as prescribed by the State Board of Education by regulation, with one additional unit required in mathematics, science, and computer science to include keyboarding.~~ For students in a college preparatory track, as defined by the state board, one additional unit must be earned in a foreign language; and for students in a track designed to enter the work force, as defined by the state board, one additional career and technology unit must be earned. ~~Beginning with the ninth grade class of school year 1997‑98,~~ If a student counts one unit of computer science toward his mathematics requirement as permitted above, one additional unit of computer science must be earned.

(E) ~~Nothing in~~ This section ~~prohibits~~ does not prohibit local school boards of trustees from awarding recognition to students who complete additional units and credits beyond those required by this section.

(F)(1) The State Board of Education, with the advice and consent of the Education Oversight Committee, shall approve course standards and assessments and adopt rules and promulgate regulations necessary to effectuate a modified high school diploma for students who have an Individualized Education Program and whose performance is substantially below grade level, even with the use of accommodations. Eligibility for students to pursue the modified diploma is limited to those students able to access the state standards only at less complex levels and with extensively modified instruction. These students are those identified as intellectually disabled, multiply handicapped, severely emotionally disabled, and autistic. A student with a disability may not enroll in courses leading to the modified diploma without a comprehensive evaluation, conducted at age thirteen or after, to determine that the student is unable to achieve the standard diploma and without full agreement of the parent or legal guardian of the student.

(2) The modified diploma must reflect the student’s Individualized Education Program and require successful completion of twenty units. The twenty units must include four units in employment English, four units in mathematics, four units in life skills science, four units in career preparation, and either four units in career/technical education or a semester of successful supervised employment for which four units are awarded. The diploma requirements must adhere to all state and federal regulations regarding the student’s educational program.

(3) Consistent with state and federal law, students with disabilities pursuing a modified diploma may remain enrolled in school through the year of their twenty‑first birthday.

(4) The State Department of Education shall develop or adopt curriculum aligned with the course standards for the modified diploma and provide support to instruction in the courses. Assessment of student progress in courses leading to the modified diploma must incorporate accommodations to ensure that student achievement is determined by valid and reliable measures.

(5) The Education Oversight Committee shall conduct a triennial review of the modified diploma program and report on the level of student enrollment and success, the level of parent participation, and the recognition of the diploma by employers. (6) This subsection does not limit students with disabilities from pursuing and attaining the standard high school diploma. Schools and districts are urged to provide supplementary instruction and support so that all students are able to earn the standard diploma.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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