**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND ARTICLE 1, CHAPTER 103, TITLE 59 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION, TO PROVIDE THAT THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION MAY ENTER INTO INTERSTATE RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS THAT AUTHORIZE ACCREDITED DEGREE‑GRANTING INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH CAROLINA THAT OFFER POSTSECONDARY DISTANCE EDUCATION TO DO SO THROUGH SUCH RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE COMMISSION SHALL ADMINISTER AND APPROVE OR DISAPPROVE SUCH AGREEMENTS IN SOUTH CAROLINA; TO PROVIDE THAT THE COMMISSION MAY DEVELOP POLICIES AND REGULATIONS NECESSARY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS SECTION; AND TO PROVIDE THAT PARTICIPATION IN INTERSTATE RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS SHALL BE VOLUNTARY TO ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 103, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 59‑103‑17. (A) The Commission on Higher Education may enter into interstate reciprocity agreements, including, but not limited to, the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement, that authorize accredited degree‑granting institutions of higher education that offer postsecondary distance education to do so through such reciprocity agreements. The commission shall administer these agreements and shall approve or disapprove participation in these agreements by accredited degree‑granting institutions of higher education in this State. The commission may assume and exercise all powers, duties, and responsibilities associated with and required under the terms of an interstate reciprocity agreement.

(B) The commission may develop policies, procedures or regulations necessary for the implementation of this section, including the establishment of fees to be paid by participating institutions to cover direct and indirect administrative costs incurred by the commission. Participation in interstate reciprocity agreements shall be voluntary to eligible institutions of higher education in this State.

(C) Nothing in this section may be construed to prohibit institutions of higher education in this State that do not participate in any interstate reciprocity agreement entered into by the commission from offering postsecondary distance education.

(D) Nothing in this section may be construed to prohibit or reduce the commission’s authority over institutions of higher education offering distance education in this State if the institution is not a participant in the interstate reciprocity agreement in which the commission participates.”

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

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