**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 59‑1‑425, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CALENDAR YEAR OPENING DATE, SO AS TO PROVIDE THAT BEGINNING WITH THE 2020‑2021 SCHOOL YEAR, THE OPENING DATE FOR STUDENTS MUST NOT BE BEFORE THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF AUGUST, VARIABLE BY FIVE DAYS AS NEEDED TO ENSURE STUDENTS RECEIVE AT LEAST NINETY DAYS OF INSTRUCTION BEFORE WINTER BREAK.

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

SECTION 1. Section 59‑1‑425(A) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(A)(1) A local school district board of trustees of the State has the authority to establish an annual school calendar for teachers, staff, and students. The statutory school term is one hundred ninety days annually and must consist of a minimum of one hundred eighty days of instruction covering at least nine calendar months. ~~However, beginning with the 2007‑2008 school year, the opening date for students must not be before the third Monday in August, except for~~

(2) Beginning with the 2020‑2021 School Year, the opening date for students must not be before the fifteenth day of August. A local school board may vary this August fifteenth opening date by as much as five days before or after as needed to ensure that students receive at least ninety days of instruction before the winter break. The provisions of this item do not apply to schools operating on a year‑round modified school calendar.

(3) Three days must be used for collegial professional development based upon the educational standards as required by Section 59‑18‑300. The professional development must address, at a minimum, academic achievement standards including strengthening teachers’ knowledge in their content area, teaching techniques, and assessment. No more than two days may be used for preparation of opening of schools and the remaining five days may be used for teacher planning, academic plans, and parent conferences.

(4) The number of instructional hours in an instructional day may vary according to local board policy and does not have to be uniform among the schools in the district.”

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

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