**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 59‑40‑50 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO POWERS AND DUTIES OF CHARTER SCHOOLS, TO ADD PROVISIONS CONCERNING CHARTER SCHOOLS DESIGNATED AS ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUSES AND EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS; AND TO AMEND SECTION 59‑40‑111, RELATING TO CHARTER SCHOOLS DESIGNATED AS ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION CAMPUSES, TO REVISE CRITERIA FOR THIS DESIGNATION TO INCLUDE SCHOOLS WITH FIFTY PERCENT OR MORE OF STUDENTS HAVING DEMONSTRATED NEEDS FOR CERTAIN SPECIALIZED INSTRUCTION RELATED TO LITERACY, AND TO REVISE CONSIDERATIONS OF CERTAIN DATA THAT MUST BE MADE WHEN MEASURING THE PERFORMANCE OF A CHARTER SCHOOL IN MEETING CERTAIN STATE AND FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY STANDARDS.

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

SECTION 1. Section 59‑40‑50(B)(7), as last amended by Act 164 of 2012, and (8), as last amended by Act 29 of 2013, of the 1976 Code is further amended to read:

“(7) admit all children eligible to attend public school to a charter school, subject to space limitations, except in the case of an application to create a single gender charter school or, in the case of a charter school designated as an Alternative Education Campus, pursuant to Section 59‑40‑111, with an explicit mission and purpose to serve educationally disadvantaged students. However, it is required that the racial composition of the charter school enrollment reflect that of the local school district in which the charter school is located or that of the targeted student population of the local school district that the charter school proposes to serve, to be defined for the purposes of this chapter as differing by no more than twenty percent from that population. This requirement is also subject to the provisions of Section 59‑40‑70(D). If the number of applications exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building, students must be accepted by lot, and there is no appeal to the sponsor. In the case of a charter school designated as an Alternative Education Campus, pursuant to Section 59‑40‑111, that is serving educationally disadvantaged students, if the number of applicants exceeds the capacity of a program, class, grade level, or building, students may be accepted by weighted lot as allowed by ESEA with mission‑aligned preference and the process clearly described in their charter school, and there is no appeal to the sponsor;

(8) not limit or deny admission or show preference in admission decisions to any individual or group of individuals, except in the case of an application to create a single gender charter school, in which case gender may be the only reason to show preference or deny admission to the school; a charter school may give enrollment priority to a sibling of a pupil currently enrolled and attending, or who, within the last six years, attended the school for at least one complete academic year. A public charter school shall give enrollment preference to students enrolled in the public charter school the previous school year. An enrollment preference for returning students excludes those students from entering into a lottery. A charter school also may give priority to children of a charter school employee and children of the charter committee, if priority enrollment for children of employees and of the charter committee does not constitute more than twenty percent of the enrollment of the charter school. In the case of a charter school designated as an Alternative Education Campus, pursuant to Section 59‑40‑111, mission‑aligned preference may be given to educationally disadvantaged students as specifically defined in their charter and charter contract approved by their sponsor. In addition, a charter school located on a federal military installation or base where the appropriate authorities have made buildings, facilities, and grounds on the installation or base available for use by the charter school as its principal location also may give enrollment priority to otherwise eligible students who are dependents of military personnel living in military housing on the base or installation or who are currently stationed at the base or installation not to exceed fifty percent of the total enrollment of the charter school. This priority is in addition to the other priorities provided by this item, but no child may be counted more than once for purposes of determining the percentage makeup of each priority;”

SECTION 2. Section 59‑40‑111 of the 1976 Code, as added by Act 288 of 2014, is amended to read:

“Section 59‑40‑111. (A) For purposes of this chapter, an Alternative Education Campus (AEC) is any charter school with an explicit mission and purpose as outlined in its charter to serve an enrolled student population with:

(1) severe limitations that preclude appropriate

administration of the assessments administered pursuant to federal and state requirements;

(2) fifty percent or more of students having Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in accordance with federal regulations or demonstrated need for specialized instruction in reading, spelling, or writing; or

(3) eighty‑five percent or more of enrolled students meeting the definition of a ‘high‑risk’ student including students who:

(a) have been adjudicated as juvenile delinquents or who are awaiting disposition of charges that may result in adjudication;

(b) have dropped out of school or who have not been continuously enrolled and regularly attending any school for at least one semester before enrolling in this school;

(c) have been expelled from school or who have engaged in behavior that would justify expulsion;

(d) have documented histories of personal drug or alcohol use or who have parents or guardians with documented dependencies on drugs or alcohol;

(e) have documented histories of personal street gang involvement or who have immediate family members with documented histories of street gang involvement;

(f) have documented histories of child abuse or neglect;

(g) have parents or guardians in prison or on parole or probation;

(h) have documented histories of domestic violence in the immediate family;

(i) have documented histories of repeated school suspensions;

(j) are under the age of twenty years who are parents or pregnant women;

(k) are homeless, as defined in the McKinney‑Vento Homeless Assistance Act; or

(l) have a documented history of a serious psychiatric or behavioral disorder including, but not limited to, an eating disorder or a history of suicidal or self‑injurious behaviors.

(B) Such schools must be classified as AECs by their sponsor.

(C) A high‑poverty rating alone shall not qualify any charter school for status as an AEC.

(D) Charter school applicants seeking such a designation shall provide sufficient information in their charter application to allow the authorizer to make a determination as to whether that classification applies.

(E) Charter schools already in operation may seek AEC classification by petitioning their sponsor.

(F) Charter schools receiving an AEC designation either before or after opening, shall be held to applicable state and federal accountability standards along with the academic performance standards and expectations established by written agreement between the sponsor and the school that takes into account the school’s specialized mission and student population with comparisons to any available nationally normal data with similar subsets of students and is included in their annual report in accordance with Section 59‑40‑140(H).”

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

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