

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021**

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HOUSE BILL 256

Short Title: Smart Sch. Bus Safety Pilot/Certain Counties. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Strickland, Bell, Lambeth, and D. Hall (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Education - K-12, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

March 11, 2021

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE SMART SCHOOL BUS SAFETY PILOT PROGRAM IN
CERTAIN COUNTIES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) Pilot Program; Purpose. – The Department of Public Instruction shall establish the Smart School Bus Safety Pilot Program (Program), beginning with the 2021-2022 school year and ending on or before January 1, 2025. The purpose of the Program is to modernize the transportation of public school students through technology in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SECTION 1.(b) Participation. – As part of the Program, participating local school administrative units shall identify and contract with qualifying vendors, as determined by the unit, to provide technology and services for student transportation in accordance with this section. The following local school administrative units are authorized to participate in the Program, subject to the requirements of this section:

- (1) Caldwell County Schools.
- (2) Clinton City Schools.
- (3) Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools.
- (4) Elkin City Schools.
- (5) Gaston County Schools.
- (6) Harnett County Schools.
- (7) Hickory City Schools.
- (8) Johnston County Schools.
- (9) Martin County Schools.
- (10) New Hanover County Schools.
- (11) Sampson County Schools.
- (12) Surry County Schools.
- (13) Union County Public Schools.
- (14) Watauga County Schools.
- (15) Wayne County Public Schools.
- (16) Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools.
- (17) Yadkin County Schools.

Any local board of education of a local school administrative unit authorized to participate in the Program may elect not to participate. For each local school administrative unit that elects not to participate in the Program, the Department may authorize one replacement local school administrative unit with a similar population of students to participate in the Program.



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SECTION 1.(c) Technology and Services. – Qualifying vendors shall provide technology and services for student transportation to participating local school administrative units. Participating units shall have discretion over the specific technology and services provided as long as the technology and services meet the following minimum requirements:

- (1) Improve overall communications and reporting on school buses.
- (2) Enable employee time tracking, student ridership tracking, and contact tracing in the event of a COVID-19 infection.
- (3) Enable global positioning system (GPS) tracking of school buses.
- (4) Enable turn-by-turn navigation along bus routes.
- (5) Optimize time, expenditure, and safety of bus routes.
- (6) Provide pre- and post-trip vehicle inspections that may be transmitted to the Department of Public Instruction on a regular basis.
- (7) Communicate ridership information to the student information management system.
- (8) Permit parents or legal guardians to access applicable information.
- (9) Conform to applicable guidance provided by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services for the transportation of students during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- (10) Facilitate the receipt of Medicaid reimbursement for eligible student transportation services.

SECTION 1.(d) Requirements and Contingencies. – The following requirements and contingencies shall apply to each participating local school administrative unit:

- (1) Every school bus in a participating local school administrative unit designed for the transportation of children with disabilities shall be outfitted with technology provided pursuant to the Program as long as the technology is appropriate for children with disabilities and can be provided in a cost-effective manner.
- (2) At the conclusion of the Program, all hardware provided to a participating local school administrative unit shall become the property of the unit.
- (3) Participating local school administrative units shall make use of technology or services provided pursuant to the Program at least through the conclusion of the 2023-2024 school year.

SECTION 1.(e) Reports. – No later than July 1, 2022, and annually thereafter in any year in which the Program is in effect, the Department of Public Instruction, in consultation with each participating local school administrative unit, shall report at least all of the following information to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, any committee constituted by the House of Representatives or Senate to address school safety, and the Fiscal Research Division:

- (1) An itemized breakdown of software infrastructure, hardware infrastructure, and equipment provided by qualifying vendors to participating local school administrative units pursuant to the Program.
- (2) A description of all services provided by qualifying vendors to participating local school administrative units pursuant to the Program.
- (3) A list of qualifying vendors contracting with participating local school administrative units pursuant to the Program.
- (4) The impact and effectiveness of the Program.
- (5) All expenditures of State funds pursuant to the Program.

SECTION 2. There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Public Instruction the sum of eleven million thirty-nine thousand three hundred thirty dollars (\$11,039,330) in nonrecurring funds for the 2021-2022 fiscal year to establish the Smart School Bus Safety Pilot Program in accordance with this act. These funds shall be allocated as follows:

- 1 (1) \$538,991 to Caldwell County Schools.
- 2 (2) \$128,611 to Clinton City Schools.
- 3 (3) \$399,479 to Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools.
- 4 (4) \$50,076 to Elkin City Schools.
- 5 (5) \$902,052 to Gaston County Schools.
- 6 (6) \$975,950 to Harnett County Schools.
- 7 (7) \$150,427 to Hickory City Schools.
- 8 (8) \$1,315,128 to Johnston County Schools.
- 9 (9) \$251,850 to Martin County Schools.
- 10 (10) \$908,718 to New Hanover County Schools.
- 11 (11) \$478,157 to Sampson County Schools.
- 12 (12) \$370,697 to Surry County Schools.
- 13 (13) \$1,517,406 to Union County Public Schools.
- 14 (14) \$310,659 to Watauga County Schools.
- 15 (15) \$1,078,412 to Wayne County Public Schools.
- 16 (16) \$1,455,755 to Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools.
- 17 (17) \$206,962 to Yadkin County Schools.
- 18 **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2021.