

1 State of Arkansas
2 94th General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2023
4

A Bill

SENATE BILL 505

5 By: Senator K. Hammer
6 By: Representative Cozart
7

For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MEANS BY WHICH A PUBLIC SCHOOL
10 MAY AWARD A STUDENT A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA BEFORE THE
11 STUDENT GRADUATES UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES; TO
12 DECLARE AN EMERGENCY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.
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Subtitle

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16 TO ESTABLISH A MEANS BY WHICH A PUBLIC
17 SCHOOL MAY AWARD A STUDENT A HIGH SCHOOL
18 DIPLOMA BEFORE THE STUDENT GRADUATES
19 UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES; AND TO
20 DECLARE AN EMERGENCY.
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23 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
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25 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 16, Subchapter 1, is amended
26 to add an additional section to read as follows:

27 6-16-161. Conditions under which an early diploma may be awarded.

28 (a) A public school or an open-enrollment public charter school may
29 award a student enrolled in the public school or open-enrollment public
30 charter school a high school diploma before the established graduation date
31 if:

32 (1) The student enrolled in the public school or open-enrollment
33 public charter school is:

34 (A) Terminally ill; and

35 (B) In his or her final semester of high school at the
36 public school or open-enrollment public charter school; and



1 (2) The board of directors or governing body of the public
2 school or open-enrollment public charter school in which the student is
3 enrolled has approved the provision of an early high school diploma to the
4 student.

5 (b)(1) As used in this section, "terminally ill" means, as determined
6 by a licensed medical professional, the student:

7 (A) Has an incurable condition caused by illness or
8 disease; and

9 (B) Will likely die before the date of his or her
10 graduation due to the illness or disease.

11 (2) "Terminally ill" may include a student's admittance into
12 hospice due to his or her incurable condition caused by an illness or
13 disease.

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15 SECTION 2. EMERGENCY CLAUSE. It is found and determined by the
16 General Assembly of the State of Arkansas that graduation dates for the class
17 of 2023 are imminent; that students who are terminally ill as defined by this
18 act will likely meet the conditions for an early high school diploma to be
19 awarded; that the ability of affected students within the 2023 graduation
20 class to avail themselves of the benefits of this act before their upcoming
21 graduation date directly impacts their personal mental and physical health
22 and welfare, and thus requires this act to become immediately effective; and
23 that this act is immediately necessary due to the volatile nature of the
24 conditions that qualify students for the awarding of an early high school
25 diploma as permissible by this act. Therefore, an emergency is declared to
26 exist, and this act being immediately necessary for the preservation of the
27 public peace, health, and safety shall become effective on:

28 (1) The date of its approval by the Governor;

29 (2) If the bill is neither approved nor vetoed by the Governor,
30 the expiration of the period of time during which the Governor may veto the
31 bill; or

32 (3) If the bill is vetoed by the Governor and the veto is
33 overridden, the date the last house overrides the veto.

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35 **APPROVED: 4/11/23**