

1 State of Arkansas
2 92nd General Assembly
3 Regular Session, 2019
4

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1468

5 By: Representative Lowery
6 By: Senator M. Johnson
7

For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF THE ARKANSAS CODE
10 CONCERNING PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE; AND FOR OTHER
11 PURPOSES.
12
13

Subtitle

14 TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF THE ARKANSAS CODE
15 CONCERNING PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE.
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19 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:
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21 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-18-227 is amended to read as follows:

22 6-18-227. Arkansas Opportunity Public School Choice Act ~~of 2004~~.

23 (a)(1) This section may be referred to and cited as the "Arkansas
24 Opportunity Public School Choice Act ~~of 2004~~".

25 (2)(A) The purpose of this section is to provide enhanced
26 opportunity for students in this state to gain the knowledge and skills
27 necessary for postsecondary education, a technical education, or the world of
28 work.

29 (B) The General Assembly:

30 (i) Recognizes that the Arkansas Constitution, as
31 interpreted by the Supreme Court in Lake View School District No. 25 v.
32 Huckabee, 351 Ark. 31 (2002), makes education a paramount duty of the state;

33 (ii) Finds that the Arkansas Constitution requires
34 the state to provide an adequate education;

35 (iii) Further finds that a student should not be
36 compelled against the wishes of the parent, guardian, or the student, if the



1 student is over eighteen (18) years of age, to remain in a public school ~~or~~
 2 ~~school~~ district classified by the State Board of Education as a ~~school or~~
 3 school district in ~~academic distress under § 6-15-428 [repealed]~~ need of
 4 Level 5 – intensive support under §§ 6-15-2913 or 6-15-2915 or a public
 5 school that has a rating of "F" under §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-2106 and state
 6 board rules; and

7 (iv) Shall make available a public school choice
 8 option in order to give a ~~child~~ student the opportunity to attend a public
 9 school or school district not in ~~academic distress~~ need of Level 5 –
 10 intensive support under §§ 6-15-2913 or 6-15-2915 or that does not have a
 11 rating of "F" under §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-2106 and state board rules.

12 (3) The General Assembly further finds that giving more options
 13 to parents and students with respect to where the students attend public
 14 school will increase the responsiveness and effectiveness of the state’s
 15 schools, since teachers, administrators, and school district board members
 16 will have added incentives to satisfy the educational needs of the students
 17 who reside in the district.

18 (4) A public school choice program is hereby established to
 19 enable ~~any~~ a student to transfer ~~from~~, subject to the restrictions in this
 20 section, from a: a public school or school district

21 (A) Public school district that is classified by the state
 22 board as a public school ~~or school~~ district in ~~academic distress~~ need of
 23 Level 5 – intensive support under §§ 6-15-2913 or 6-15-2915 to another public
 24 school ~~or school~~ district in the state that is not classified as in ~~academic~~
 25 ~~distress~~ need of level 5 – intensive support under §§ 6-15-2913 or 6-15-2915,
 26 subject to the restrictions contained in this section; or

27 (B) Public school that has a rating of "F" under §§ 6-15-
 28 2105 and 6-15-2106 and state board rules to a public school that does not
 29 have a rating of "F" under §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-2106 and state board rules.

30 (b)(1) Upon the request of a parent, guardian, or ~~the~~ student, if the
 31 student is over eighteen (18) years of age, a student may transfer from his
 32 or her resident district or public school to another school district or
 33 public school under this section if, at the time of the request under
 34 subdivision (b)(1) of this section:

35 (A) Either:

36 (i) The resident public ~~school or~~ school district

1 has been classified by the state board as a public ~~school or~~ school district
 2 in ~~academic distress~~ need of Level 5 – intensive support under §§ 6-15-2913
 3 or 6-15-2915; or

4 (ii) The resident public school has a rating of "F"
 5 under §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-2106 and state board rules; and

6 (B) The parent, guardian, or ~~the~~ student, if the student
 7 is over eighteen (18) years of age, has notified the Department of Education
 8 and both the sending and receiving school districts of the request for a
 9 transfer no later than ~~July 30~~ May 1 of the ~~first~~ year ~~in which~~ before the
 10 student intends to transfer.

11 (2)(A)(i) For the purposes of continuity of educational choice,
 12 ~~the~~ a transfer under this section shall operate as an irrevocable election
 13 for each subsequent entire school year and shall remain in force until the
 14 student completes high school or the parent, guardian, or ~~the~~ student, if the
 15 student is over eighteen (18) years of age, timely makes application under a
 16 provision of law governing attendance in or transfer to another public school
 17 or school district other than the student’s assigned school or resident
 18 district.

19 (ii) A transfer under this section is effective at
 20 the beginning of the next academic year.

21 (B) Application for the opportunity public school choice
 22 option under this section shall ~~be:~~

23 (i) Be provided by the department, ~~shall contain;~~
 24 and

25 (ii) Contain a notice that a transfer under this
 26 ~~subsection shall operate~~ section:

27 (a) Operates as an irrevocable choice for at
 28 least one (1) entire school year, ~~and shall remain; and~~

29 (b) Remains in ~~force~~ effect until the student
 30 completes high school, ~~as provided in this subsection~~ except as otherwise
 31 provided by law.

32 (3)(A) For each student enrolled in or assigned to a public
 33 ~~school or~~ school district that ~~has been~~ is classified by the state board as a
 34 public school ~~or school~~ district in ~~academic distress~~ need of Level 5 –
 35 intensive support under §§ 6-15-2913 or 6-15-2915 or a public school that has
 36 a rating of "F" under §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-2106 and state board rules, a

1 school district shall:

2 (i) Timely notify the parent, guardian, or ~~the~~
3 student, if the student is over eighteen (18) years of age, as soon as
4 practicable after the designation is made, of all options available under
5 this section; and

6 (ii)(a) Offer the parent, guardian, or ~~the~~ student,
7 if the student is over eighteen (18) years of age, an opportunity to submit
8 an application to enroll the student in the upcoming school year in any
9 public ~~school or~~ school district that ~~has not been~~ is not classified by the
10 state board as a public ~~school or~~ school district in ~~academic distress~~ need
11 of Level 5 – intensive support under §§ 6-15-2913 and 6-15-2915 or a public
12 school that does not have a rating of "F" under §§ 6-15-2105 or 6-15-2106 and
13 state board rules.

14 (b) The opportunity to continue attending the
15 public school or school district that ~~is not classified as a public school or~~
16 ~~school district in academic distress shall remain in force~~ the student
17 transfers to under this section remains in effect until the student graduates
18 from high school.

19 (B)(i) The parent or guardian of a student enrolled in or
20 assigned to a public ~~school or~~ school district that ~~has been~~ is classified by
21 the state board as a public ~~school or~~ school district in ~~academic distress~~
22 need of Level 5 – intensive support under §§ 6-15-2913 or 6-15-2915 or a
23 public school that does not have a rating of "F" under §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-
24 2106 and state board rules may choose as an alternative to enroll the student
25 in a legally allowable public ~~school or~~ school district that is not
26 classified as a public ~~school or~~ school district in ~~academic distress~~ need of
27 Level 5 – intensive support under §§ 6-15-2913 or 6-15-2915 or a public
28 school that does not have a rating of "F" under §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-2106
29 and state board rules and that is nearest to the student's legal residence.

30 (ii) ~~That~~ The school ~~or school~~ district under
31 subdivision (b)(3)(B)(i) of this section shall accept the student and report
32 the student for purposes of ~~the~~ funding under applicable state law.

33 (C)(i) Students with disabilities who are eligible to
34 receive services from the school district under federal or state law,
35 including students receiving additional funding through federal title
36 programs specific to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, Pub.

1 L. No. 89-10, and who participate in the public school choice program, remain
 2 eligible to receive services from the school district as provided by federal
 3 or state law.

4 (ii) Any funding for ~~the~~ a student under subdivision
 5 (b)(3)(C)(i) of this section shall be transferred to the public school or
 6 school district to which the student transfers.

7 (c)(1)(A) The receiving public school or school district under this
 8 section may transport students to and from the transferring public school or
 9 school district, and the cost of transporting students shall be the
 10 responsibility of the transferring public ~~school~~ or school district except as
 11 provided under subdivisions (c)(1)(B) and (c)(2) of this section.

12 (B) A transferring public school or school district ~~shall~~
 13 ~~not be~~ is not required to spend more than four hundred dollars (\$400) per
 14 student per school year for transportation required under subdivision
 15 (c)(1)(A) of this section.

16 (2) Upon the transferring public ~~school's~~ or school district's
 17 removal from classification as a public ~~school~~ or school district in ~~academic~~
 18 ~~distress~~ need of Level 5 - intensive support under §§ 6-15-2913 or 6-15-2915
 19 or the transferring public school's receipt of a rating other than "F" under
 20 §§ 6-15-2105 and 6-15-2106 and state board rules, the transportation costs
 21 shall no longer be the responsibility of the transferring public school or
 22 school district, and the student's transportation and the costs of the
 23 transportation shall be the responsibility of the parent or guardian or of
 24 the receiving public ~~school~~ or school district if the receiving public school
 25 or school district agrees to bear the transportation costs.

26 (d)(1)(A) ~~Each~~ A school district board of directors shall offer the
 27 opportunity public school choice option ~~within the~~ to public schools in the
 28 school district of the school district board of directors.

29 (B) The opportunity public school choice option shall be
 30 offered in addition to other existing choice programs.

31 (2)(A)(i) A school district shall not deny a student the ability
 32 to attend a school in the student's school district of choice under this
 33 section unless there is a lack of capacity at the school in the student's
 34 school district of choice.

35 (ii) A lack of capacity may be claimed by a school
 36 district only if the school district has reached the maximum student-to-

1 teacher ratio allowed under federal law, state law, the rules for standards
2 of accreditation, or other applicable regulations.

3 (B) The race or ethnicity of a student shall not be used
4 to deny a student the ability to attend a school in the student's school
5 district of choice under this section.

6 (3) A student or the student's parent or guardian may appeal a
7 school district's decision to deny admission to a school in ~~a~~ the student's
8 school district of choice due to lack of capacity to the state board after
9 the student or the student's parent or guardian receives a written notice
10 from the school district of choice that admission has been denied.

11 (4) The department shall promulgate rules governing the use of
12 school capacity as a basis for denying admission under this section.

13 (e)(1) ~~The provisions of this~~ This section and all student choice
14 options created in this section shall ~~comply with § 6-18-206(d) [repealed],~~
15 ~~(e) [repealed], and (i) [repealed] and shall~~ not be subject to any other
16 limitation or restriction provided by law.

17 (2) If any part of this section conflicts with ~~the provisions of~~
18 a federal desegregation court order applicable to a school district, ~~the~~
19 ~~provisions of~~ the federal desegregation court order shall govern.

20 (f) The department shall develop an annual report on the status of
21 school choice and deliver the report to the state board, the Governor, and
22 the Legislative Council at least ~~ninety (90)~~ sixty (60) days before the
23 convening of the regular session of the General Assembly.

24 (g) ~~Each~~ A school district board of directors shall ~~annually~~ report
25 annually the number of students applying for and attending the various types
26 of public schools of choice in the district, including without limitation
27 schools such as magnet schools, according to rules adopted by the state
28 board.

29 (h)(1) A receiving district shall accept credits toward graduation
30 that were awarded by another district.

31 (2) The receiving district shall award a diploma to a
32 nonresident student if the student meets the receiving district's graduation
33 requirements.

34 (i) For purposes of determining a school district's state funding, the
35 nonresident student shall be counted as a part of the average daily
36 membership of the district to which the student has transferred.

1 (j)(1) All school districts shall report to the department on an
2 annual basis the race, gender, and other pertinent information needed to
3 properly monitor compliance with the provisions of this section.

4 (2) The reports may be on ~~those~~ forms that are prescribed by the
5 department, or the data may be submitted electronically by the district using
6 a format authorized by the department.

7 (3) The department may put on probation the superintendent of
8 any school district that fails to file its report each year or fails to file
9 any other information with a published deadline requested from school
10 districts by the department so long as thirty (30) calendar days are given
11 between the request for the information and the published deadline.

12 (4) A copy of the report shall be provided to the House
13 Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education.

14 (k)(1) Unless excused by the receiving school district for illness or
15 other good cause:

16 (A) Any student participating in the opportunity public
17 school choice option shall ~~remain~~:

18 (i) Remain in attendance throughout the school year;
19 and ~~shall comply~~

20 (ii) Comply fully with the school's code of conduct;
21 and

22 (B) The parent or guardian of each student participating
23 in the opportunity public school choice option shall comply fully with the
24 receiving public school's parental involvement requirements.

25 (2) A participant who fails to comply with this section shall
26 forfeit the opportunity public school choice option.

27 (1)(1) The maximum opportunity public school choice funds granted for
28 an eligible student shall be calculated based on applicable state law.

29 (2)(A) The receiving school district shall report all students
30 who transfer from another public school under ~~the public school choice~~
31 ~~program~~ this section.

32 (B) The students attending public schools ~~pursuant to the~~
33 ~~opportunity public school choice option~~ under this section shall be reported
34 separately from those students reported for purposes of compliance with
35 applicable state law.

36 (3) ~~The~~ A public school that provides services to students with

1 disabilities shall receive funding as determined by applicable federal and
2 state law.

3 (m) The state board shall adopt any rules necessary for the
4 implementation of this section ~~pursuant to~~ under the Arkansas Administrative
5 Procedure Act, § 25-15-201 et seq.

6 (n) A district under the public school choice program under this
7 section shall request public service announcements to be made over the
8 broadcast media and in the print media at such times and in such a manner as
9 to inform parents or guardians of students in adjoining districts of the
10 availability of the program under this section, the application deadline, and
11 the requirements and procedure for nonresident students to participate in the
12 program under this section.

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14 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-18-1905(a) and (b), concerning a
15 student's application for a transfer under the Public School Choice Act of
16 2015, are amended to read as follows:

17 (a) If a student seeks to attend a school in a nonresident district,
18 the student's parent shall submit an application:

19 (1) To the nonresident district, ~~which shall notify the resident~~
20 ~~district of the filing of the application within ten (10) calendar days of~~
21 ~~receipt of the application~~ with a copy to the student's resident district;

22 (2) On a form approved by the Department of Education; and

23 (3) Postmarked no later than May 1 of the year in which the
24 student seeks to begin the fall semester at the nonresident district.

25 (b) ~~A Both the nonresident district and the resident district that~~
26 ~~receives an application under subsection (a) of this section~~ shall, upon
27 receipt of the application, place a date and time stamp on the application
28 that reflects the date and time ~~the nonresident~~ each district received the
29 application.

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31 SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-18-1905(d), concerning the acceptance or
32 rejection of a student's application for transfer under the Public School
33 Choice Act of 2015, is amended to read as follows:

34 (d) Before accepting or rejecting an application, a nonresident
35 district shall determine whether ~~one;~~

36 (1) One of the limitations under § 6-18-1906 applies to the

1 application; and

2 (2)(A) The resident district has met its numerical net maximum
3 limit on school choice transfers under § 6-18-1906.

4 (B) The nonresident district shall contact the resident
5 district to determine whether the resident district has met its net maximum
6 limit under subdivision (d)(2)(A) of this section.

7 (C) In determining whether a resident district has met its
8 net maximum limit on school choice transfers under subdivision (d)(2)(A) of
9 this section, the nonresident district shall review and make a determination
10 on each application in the order in which the application was received by the
11 nonresident district.

12 (D) If the resident district has met its numerical net
13 maximum limit on school choice transfers, the nonresident district shall
14 issue a rejection of the affected school choice application.

15 (E)(i) If an applicant under this section has been
16 rejected due to the numerical net maximum limit, then the applicant shall
17 retain priority for a transfer under this subchapter until July 1 and be
18 reconsidered when the resident district is no longer at the numerical net
19 maximum limit.

20 (ii) The resident district shall promptly notify the
21 nonresident district when it is no longer at its numerical net maximum limit.

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23 SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-18-1906(b)(1)(A), concerning a numerical
24 net maximum limit on school choice transfers under the Public School Choice
25 Act of 2015, is amended to read as follows:

26 (b)(1)(A) There is established a numerical net maximum limit on school
27 choice transfers each school year from a school district, less any school
28 choice transfers into the school district, under this section of not more
29 than three percent (3%) of the enrollment that exists in the school district
30 as of October 15 1 of the immediately preceding school year.

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