

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2019

H.B. 552
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HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH40245-MTa-2

Short Title: After-School Robotics Grants/Athletics. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Hardister, Saine, Horn, and Beasley (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AN EDUCATIONAL AND COMPETITIVE AFTER-SCHOOL
3 ROBOTICS GRANT PROGRAM, TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
4 TO ADOPT RULES FOR COMPETITIVE ROBOTICS, AND TO PERMIT EXCUSED
5 ABSENCES FOR COMPETITIVE ROBOTICS.

6 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

7
8 **PART I. EDUCATIONAL AND COMPETITIVE AFTER-SCHOOL ROBOTICS**
9 **GRANT PROGRAM**

10 **SECTION 1.(a)** Part 2B of Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is
11 amended by adding a new section to read:

12 **"§ 115C-102.9. Educational and competitive after-school robotics grant program.**

13 (a) Definitions. – The following definitions shall apply in this section:

14 (1) Public school unit. – A local school administrative unit, charter school,
15 regional school, innovative school, or laboratory school.

16 (2) Robotics partner. – A third-party entity, such as a nonprofit organization or
17 institution of higher education, approved by the Department of Public
18 Instruction, that is able to provide adequate support for an after-school
19 robotics program. In order to provide adequate support, a robotics partner
20 must meet at least all of the following criteria:

21 a. Have a national presence in robotics education and competition.

22 b. Provide adequate instruction and programming for students and adult
23 volunteers in (i) robotics education, (ii) project-based learning, and
24 (iii) competitive robotics.

25 c. Promote a safe and equitable social environment.

26 (b) Program; Purpose. – There is established the Educational and Competitive
27 After-School Robotics Grant Program (Program). The purpose of the Program shall be to (i)
28 promote evidence-based, after-school programs for robotics education and competition and (ii)
29 motivate students to pursue education and career opportunities in science, technology,
30 engineering, and mathematics while building critical life and work-related skills.

31 (c) Eligibility. - Any public school unit is eligible to apply to the Department of Public
32 Instruction for a grant to develop an educational and competitive after-school robotics program
33 with a robotics partner.

34 (d) Applications; Criteria and Guidelines. – No later than August 1 of each year that funds
35 are made available, the Department shall develop and publish criteria and guidelines for the
36 application process for the Program in the upcoming school year, including any documentation



1 required to be submitted by the applicants. The Department shall accept applications until
 2 September 30 of each school year. Applications shall include, at a minimum, the following
 3 information:

4 (1) Evidence that the applicant has or will be able to establish a relationship with
 5 a robotics partner.

6 (2) A proposed budget for the educational and competitive after-school robotics
 7 program.

8 (e) Award and Use of Funds. – From funds made available for the Program, the
 9 Department shall award grants to the selected applicants by October 31 of each school year.
 10 Funds may be used for any of the following purposes:

11 (1) Establish a relationship with a robotics partner.

12 (2) Purchase robotics kits.

13 (3) Provide stipends for coaches.

14 (4) Make payments associated with participation in a robotics league or robotics
 15 competition.

16 (5) Pay fees incurred as part of the administration of a robotics team.

17 (f) Reporting. – No later than July 15, 2020, and annually thereafter, the Department
 18 shall report the following information from the prior school year to the Joint Legislative
 19 Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division:

20 (1) Number and amounts of grants awarded.

21 (2) Identities of the public school units receiving grants.

22 (3) Identities of public school units that applied for grants but did not receive one.

23 (4) The extent to which students participating in after-school robotics programs
 24 funded by the Program experienced measurable improvement in academic
 25 performance, if any."

26 **SECTION 1.(b)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
 27 Public Instruction the sum of one million six hundred seventy thousand dollars (\$1,670,000) in
 28 recurring funds for the 2019-2020 fiscal year to implement the Educational and Competitive
 29 After-School Robotics Grant Program described in this section, beginning in the 2019-2020
 30 school year.

31 **PART II. TREAT COMPETITIVE ROBOTICS AS AN INTERSCHOLASTIC** 32 **ATHLETIC ACTIVITY**

33 **SECTION 2.(a)** G.S. 115C-12(23) reads as rewritten:

34 **"§ 115C-12. Powers and duties of the Board generally.**

35 The general supervision and administration of the free public school system shall be vested
 36 in the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education shall establish all needed rules
 37 and regulations for the system of free public schools, subject to laws enacted by the General
 38 Assembly. In accordance with Sections 7 and 8 of Article III of the North Carolina Constitution,
 39 the Superintendent of Public Instruction, as an elected officer and Council of State member, shall
 40 administer all needed rules and regulations adopted by the State Board of Education through the
 41 Department of Public Instruction. The powers and duties of the State Board of Education are
 42 defined as follows:
 43

44 ...

45 (23) **Power to Adopt Eligibility Rules for Interscholastic Athletic Competition. –**
 46 The State Board of Education shall adopt rules governing interscholastic
 47 athletic activities conducted by local boards of education, including eligibility
 48 for student participation. Those rules shall include competitive robotics as an
 49 interscholastic athletic activity. With regard to middle schools and high
 50 schools, the rules shall provide for the following:
 51

...

1 The State Board of Education may authorize a designated organization to
2 apply and enforce the Board's rules governing participation in interscholastic
3 athletic activities at the high school level."

4 **SECTION 2.(b)** G.S. 115C-379 reads as rewritten:

5 "**§ 115C-379. Method of enforcement.**

6 (a) It shall be the duty of the State Board of Education to formulate the rules that may be
7 necessary for the proper enforcement of the provisions of this Part. The Board shall prescribe (i)
8 what shall constitute unlawful absence, (ii) what causes may constitute legitimate excuses for
9 temporary nonattendance due to a student's physical or mental inability to attend or a student's
10 participation in a valid educational opportunity such as service as a legislative page or a
11 Governor's page, and (iii) under what circumstances teachers, principals, or superintendents may
12 excuse pupils for nonattendance due to immediate demands of the farm or the home in certain
13 seasons of the year in the several sections of the State.

14 (b) The rules shall require school principals to authorize excused absences as follows:

15 (1) ~~a-~~A minimum of two excused absences each academic year for religious
16 observances required by the faith of a student or the student's ~~parents-parent,~~
17 guardian, or legal custodian.

18 (2) Whenever a student is unable to attend class because of a school-sponsored
19 robotics competition.

20 The rules may require that the student's ~~parents-give-parent, guardian, or custodian gives the~~
21 principal written notice of the request for an excused absence a reasonable time prior to the
22 ~~religious observance event.~~ The student shall be given the opportunity to make up any tests or
23 other work missed due to an excused absence ~~for a religious observance.~~ approved in accordance
24 with this section.

25 (c) It shall be the duty of all school officials to carry out such instructions from the State
26 Board of Education, and any school official failing to carry out such instructions shall be guilty
27 of a Class 3 misdemeanor: Provided, that the compulsory attendance law herein prescribed shall
28 not be in force in any local school administrative unit that has a higher compulsory attendance
29 feature than that provided herein."
30

31 **PART III. EFFECTIVE DATE**

32 **SECTION 3.** Section 1 of this act becomes effective July 1, 2019. Section 2 of this
33 act is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.
34 Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.