GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021

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HOUSE BILL 256
PROPOSED COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE H256-CSRQa-7 [v.3]
03/25/2021 10:44:47 AM

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

Sponsors:

Referred to:

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 selection of qualifying vendors for this Program shall be exempt from the requirements of G.S. 115C-240(d). The following local school administrative units are authorized to participate in the Program, subject to the requirements of this section:

(1) Burke County Schools.
(2) Caldwell County Schools.
(3) Chatham County Schools.
(4) Clinton City Schools.
(5) Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools.
(6) Elkin City Schools.
(7) Gaston County Schools.
(8) Harnett County Schools.
(9) Hickory City Schools.
(10) Iredell-Statesville Schools.
(11) Johnston County Schools.
(12) Martin County Schools.
(13) New Hanover County Schools.
(14) Sampson County Schools.
(15) Surry County Schools.
(16) Transylvania County Schools.
(17) Union County Public Schools.
(18) Watauga County Schools.
(19) Wayne County Public Schools.
(20) Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools.
(21) 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.

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 thirteen million seven hundred fifty-two thousand dollars ($13,752,000) 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) $478,000 to Burke County Schools.
(2) $540,000 to Caldwell County Schools.
(3) $436,000 to Chatham County Schools.
(4) $140,000 to Clinton City Schools.
(5) $435,000 to Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools.
(6) $51,000 to Elkin City Schools.
(7) $978,000 to Gaston County Schools.
(8) $1,060,000 to Harnett County Schools.
(9) $150,500 to Hickory City Schools.
(10) $1,425,000 to Johnston County Schools.
(11) $912,000 to Iredell-Statesville Schools.
(12) $273,000 to Martin County Schools.
(13) $984,000 to New Hanover County Schools.
(14) $520,000 to Sampson County Schools.
(15) $402,500 to Surry County Schools.
(16) $238,000 to Transylvania County Schools.
(17) $1,650,000 to Union County Public Schools.
(18) $337,000 to Watauga County Schools.
(19) $1,079,000 to Wayne County Public Schools.
(20) $1,456,000 to Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools.
(21) $207,000 to Yadkin County Schools.

SECTION 3. This act becomes effective July 1, 2021.