

In November of 2014, the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled that the State was failing to provide students with a minimally adequate education in the 21-year-old Abbeville vs. South Carolina school funding lawsuit. After the ruling, the Education Policy Review and Reform Task Force was formed in the House. It was made up of lawmakers, business leaders and representatives from the plaintiff districts and charged with studying possible remedies and submitting recommendations. The recommendations, which included 12 major findings, resulted in a package of "Abbeville" bills that were filed in the House and moved through the General Assembly this year. The Senate also formed a special task force regarding the Abbeville bills.

In addition to the Abbeville bills, funding allocations were included in this year's state appropriations bill for programs directed to the Abbeville districts, although the Abbeville districts are not specifically cited. The following is a description of the Abbeville bills that passed, those that did not pass, and budget provisos related to the Abbeville bills.

updated July 2016

Abbeville bills that passed

House bill 4936 establishes "college and career ready" as the State's educational goal and the standards and areas of learning to be measured for high school graduates. ***The State Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office estimates the fiscal impact to the state's general fund to be zero.***

House bill 4938 directs the SC Department of Education (SCDE), the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) to survey college students who have been fully admitted into their institution's teacher education program to seek their input on incentives they would require to teach in rural, economically challenged schools. The results of the survey are to be reported to the General Assembly by December 1, 2016. ***The State Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office estimates the fiscal impact to the state's general fund to be zero.***

House bill 4939 establishes a committee to review all state education laws and report to the General Assembly those that are obsolete or no longer applicable. The bill directs the SCDE to develop a system for providing services to school districts on a regional basis for academic assistance and assistance with finances. The state superintendent is to report the design of the system to the General Assembly no later than December 31, 2016, and every year thereafter, report on the progress of the system. It further authorizes the SCDE to monitor in underperforming districts the operations of school boards to determine if they are operating efficiently and effectively and the professional development of teachers, staff, and administrators to ascertain what improvements and changes are necessary. ***The State Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office estimates the fiscal impact to the state's general fund to be zero.***

House bill 4940 establishes the Office of Transformation within the SCDE and its duties, functions, and responsibilities. The office is to provide technical assistance to underperforming schools and districts with a rating of below average or at risk on the most recent annual report card or with the lowest percentages of students meeting state standards or state assessments or with the lowest high school graduation rates. *The State Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office estimates the fiscal impact to the state's general fund to be \$2.5 million to hire additional personnel.*

Abbeville bills that did not pass

House bill 4937, which would have established the membership, duties and functions of the Education and Economic Development Coordinating Council under the Education and Economic Development Act, did not pass in the Senate.

House bill 4941, which would have directed the SCDE to develop and adopt a statewide program for identifying and correcting school districts in fiscal crisis, did not pass in the Senate.

House bill 4776, which would have created the South Carolina Education Facilities Act, a \$200 million state bond bill for construction and repairs to school facilities ranked in priority by the SC State Board of Education and the SCDE, did not pass in the Senate.

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Appropriations

(directed specifically to Abbeville districts)

Technical assistance to low performing schools and Abbeville districts: \$4 million

A facilities needs assessment and review in school districts beginning with districts with low tax base: \$1.5 million

Efficiency studies focused on fiscal management in school districts beginning with high poverty school districts: \$3.1 million

Rural teacher initiative to recruit and retain teachers in districts experiencing high turnover rates in excess of 11 percent (current appropriation \$9.7 million): \$8.2 million additional

Teacher recruitment and retention in the Abbeville districts and in districts with 80 percent or more poverty: \$9 million

Technology technical assistance in Abbeville districts: \$16.8 million

Other Appropriations

(cited by the General Assembly in its Joint Report to the Supreme Court, June 29, 2016)

\$218 million to increase BSC by \$130 to \$2,350 per pupil

\$10 million for 213 new career specialists (EEDA)

2 percent teacher pay increase, step increase to 23 years

\$3 million to fund high-speed mobile internet service for students who do not have access at home

\$15.1 million for new buses (15-year replacement cycle)

\$3.5 million to provide transportation services to students who would otherwise have to walk in hazardous conditions

\$1.1 million for VirtualSC program (serves 40,000, includes 18 new teachers)

\$18 million for instructional materials

\$29.3 million for the K-12 Technology Initiative in the Lottery (\$6.5 million will go to Plaintiff Districts)

\$1 million increase for full-day 4K instructional cost increase (public and private)

\$3 million in Lottery for College and Career Readiness