

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023**

**SESSION LAW 2023-128
HOUSE BILL 142**

AN ACT TO MODIFY PENALTIES AND DEFINITIONS FOR CERTAIN SEX OFFENSES AGAINST STUDENTS, TO INCREASE THE PENALTIES FOR THE FAILURE OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS TO REPORT CERTAIN MISCONDUCT TO THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, TO REQUIRE PUBLIC SCHOOL UNITS TO SHOW STUDENTS IN GRADES SIX THROUGH TWELVE A VIDEO PRODUCED BY THE CENTER FOR SAFER SCHOOLS CONTAINING AGE-APPROPRIATE INFORMATION ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE, AND TO DEFINE CONDUCT DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE OFFICE OR EMPLOYMENT AS IT PERTAINS TO THE FORFEITURE OF RETIREMENT BENEFITS, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION; TO CLARIFY THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH ITS ELECTORAL DISTRICTS; AND TO REQUIRE THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION AND ASHEVILLE CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION TO STUDY MERGING THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT AND THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

PART I. MODIFY PENALTIES AND DEFINITIONS FOR CERTAIN SEX OFFENSES AGAINST STUDENTS

SECTION 1.(a) G.S. 14-27.32 reads as rewritten:

"§ 14-27.32. Sexual activity with a student.

(a) If a defendant, who is a teacher, school administrator, student teacher, school safety officer, or coach, at any age, or who is other school personnel, and who is at least four years older than the victim engages in vaginal intercourse or a sexual act with a victim who is a student, at any time during or after the time the defendant and victim were present together in the same school, but before the victim ceases to be a student, the defendant is guilty of a Class G felony, except when the defendant is lawfully married to the student. The term "same school" means a school at which the student is enrolled and the defendant is employed, assigned, or volunteers.

(b) A defendant who is school personnel, other than a teacher, school administrator, student teacher, school safety officer, or coach, and is less than four years older than the victim and engages in vaginal intercourse or a sexual act with a victim who is a student, is guilty of a Class ~~I~~G felony.

(c) This section shall apply unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing for greater punishment.

(d) Consent is not a defense to a charge under this section.

(e) For purposes of this section, the terms "~~school~~", "~~school personnel~~", and "~~student~~" shall have the same meaning as in G.S. 14-202.4(d). For purposes of this section, the term "~~school safety officer~~" shall include a school resource officer or any other person who is regularly present in a school for the purpose of promoting and maintaining safe and orderly schools. following definitions apply:

(1) School. – As defined in G.S. 14-202.4(d)(2).



- (2) School personnel. – As defined in G.S. 14-202.4(d)(3).
- (3) School safety officer. – A school resource officer or any other person who is regularly present in a school for the purpose of promoting and maintaining safe and orderly schools.
- (4) Student. – A person enrolled in kindergarten, or in grade one through grade 12 in any school within six months of any violation of this section."

SECTION 1.(b) G.S. 14-202.4 reads as rewritten:

"§ 14-202.4. Taking indecent liberties with a student.

(a) If a defendant, who is a teacher, school administrator, student teacher, school safety officer, or coach, at any age, or who is other school personnel and is at least four years older than the victim, takes indecent liberties with a victim who is a student, at any time during or after the time the defendant and victim were present together in the same school but before the victim ceases to be a student, the defendant is guilty of a Class I-G felony, unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing for greater punishment. A person is not guilty of taking indecent liberties with a student if the person is lawfully married to the student.

(b) If a defendant, who is school personnel, other than a teacher, school administrator, student teacher, school safety officer, or coach, and who is less than four years older than the victim, takes indecent liberties with a student as provided in subsection (a) of this section, the defendant is guilty of a Class I-G felony.

(c) Consent is not a defense to a charge under this section.

(d) For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

- (1) ~~"Indecent liberties" means:~~Indecent liberties. – Means any of the following:
 - a. Willfully taking or attempting to take any immoral, improper, or indecent liberties with a student for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual ~~desire;~~or desire.
 - b. Willfully committing or attempting to commit any lewd or lascivious act upon or with the body or any part or member of the body of a student.

For purposes of this section, the term indecent liberties does not include vaginal intercourse or a sexual ~~act as defined by G.S. 14-27.20.act.~~

- (1a) ~~"Same school" means a~~Same school. – A school at which (i) the student is enrolled or is present for a school-sponsored or school-related activity and (ii) the school personnel is employed, volunteers, or is present for a school-sponsored or school-related activity.
- (2) ~~"School" means any~~School. – Any public school, charter school, or nonpublic school under Parts 1 and 2 of Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes.
- (3) ~~"School personnel" means any~~School personnel. – Any person included in the definition contained in G.S. 115C-332(a)(2), including those employed by a nonpublic, charter, or regional school, and any person who volunteers at a school or a school-sponsored activity.
- (3a) ~~"School safety officer" means any~~School safety officer. – Any other person who is regularly present in a school for the purpose of promoting and maintaining safe and orderly schools and includes a school resource officer.
- (3b) Sexual act. – As defined in G.S. 14-27.20.
- (4) ~~"Student" means a~~Student. – A person enrolled in kindergarten, or in grade one through grade 12 in any school-school within six months of any violation of this section."

SECTION 1.(c) This section becomes effective December 1, 2023, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date.

PART II. INCREASE PENALTIES FOR FAILING TO REPORT MISCONDUCT TOWARD CHILDREN

SECTION 2.(a) Article 22 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Part to read:

"Part 3B. Reporting Misconduct of Licensed School Employees.

"§ 115C-326.20. Reporting misconduct of licensed school employees.

(a) For the purposes of this section, "misconduct" includes any of the following:

- (1) Conduct that justifies automatic revocation of a license under G.S. 115C-270.35(b).
- (2) The infliction of a physical injury against a child other than by accident or in self-defense.

(b) Any superintendent, assistant superintendent, associate superintendent, personnel administrator, or principal who knows, has reason to believe, or has actual notice of a complaint that an employee licensed under Article 17E of this Chapter has engaged in misconduct resulting in dismissal, disciplinary action, or resignation shall report the misconduct to the State Board of Education within five days of dismissal, determination of disciplinary action, or acceptance of resignation. If the employee resigns within 30 days of a complaint for misconduct or during an ongoing investigation of a complaint, the misconduct is presumed to have resulted in the resignation. Failure to report misconduct pursuant to this section is a Class I felony.

(c) School personnel shall not threaten, harass, or retaliate against any other person for making a report as required by this section."

SECTION 2.(b) The State Board of Education has authority to adopt temporary rules to (i) implement the requirements of this section, (ii) address disciplinary actions against professional educator licenses, and (iii) modify 16 NCAC 06C .0602 (Standards of Professional Conduct). The State Board shall adopt permanent rules no later than July 1, 2024.

SECTION 2.(c) This section becomes effective December 1, 2023, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date.

PART III. PRODUCE AND DISTRIBUTE CFSS TRAINING VIDEO

SECTION 3.(a) G.S. 115C-105.57(c) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(2a) Develop and produce age-appropriate videos to be shown to students in grades six through 12 that include at least the information listed in G.S. 115C-12(47). The videos shall be distributed to all public school units and may be provided to nonpublic schools at the request of the nonpublic school."

SECTION 3.(b) G.S. 115C-12(47) reads as rewritten:

"(47) Duty Regarding Child Abuse and Neglect. – The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, shall adopt a rule requiring information on child abuse and neglect, including age-appropriate information on sexual abuse, to be provided by public school units to students in grades six through 12. This rule shall also apply to high schools under the control of The University of North Carolina. Information shall be provided in the form of (i) a document provided to all students at the beginning of each school year and year, (ii) a display posted in visible, high-traffic areas throughout each public secondary school-school, and (iii) a video, produced in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.57(c)(2a), shown to all students no more than five days after the first day of the school year. The document and display document, display, and video shall include, at a minimum, the following information:

...."

SECTION 3.(c) The Center for Safer Schools shall produce and distribute the videos required by this section no later than June 30, 2024.

SECTION 3.(d) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the 2024-2025 school year.

PART IIIA. DEFINE CONDUCT DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE OFFICE OR EMPLOYMENT AS IT PERTAINS TO THE FORFEITURE OF RETIREMENT BENEFITS

SECTION 3A.(a) G.S. 128-21 reads as rewritten:

"§ 128-21. Definitions.

The following words and phrases as used in this Article, unless a different meaning is plainly required by the context, shall have the following meanings:

- ...
- (7c) "Conduct directly related to the office or employment" shall mean conduct by the member resulting in a felony conviction that:
- a. Is an offense identified in G.S. 115C-270.35(b), and the commission of the offense occurred while the member was employed in a public school or working in a public school subject to a memorandum of understanding.
 - b. Is an offense which required the revocation of the member's licensure or certification required for the member's employment or office at the time of the commission of the offense.
 - c. Is conduct that was directly related to the member's employment or office as determined by the Board of Trustees.

~~(7e)~~(7d) "Consumer Price Index" shall mean the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), U.S. City Average, all items, not seasonally adjusted, standard reference base, as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor.

...."

SECTION 3A.(b) G.S. 135-1 reads as rewritten:

"§ 135-1. Definitions.

The following words and phrases as used in this Chapter, unless a different meaning is plainly required by the context, shall have the following meanings:

- ...
- (7c) "Conduct directly related to the office or employment" shall mean conduct by the member resulting in a felony conviction that:
- a. Is an offense identified in G.S. 115C-270.35(b), and the commission of the offense occurred while the member was employed in a public school or working in a public school subject to a memorandum of understanding.
 - b. Is an offense which required the revocation of the member's licensure or certification required for the member's employment or office at the time of the commission of the offense.
 - c. Is conduct that was directly related to the member's employment or office as determined by the Board of Trustees.

~~(7e)~~(7d) "Consumer Price Index" shall mean the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U), U.S. City Average, all items, not seasonally adjusted, standard reference base, as published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor.

...."

SECTION 3A.(c) This section becomes effective July 1, 2023, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date.

PART IV. BUNCOMBE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTORAL DISTRICTS AND STUDY OF MERGING THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT AND THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT

SECTION 4.(a) Section 6(d) of S.L. 2023-32 is repealed.

SECTION 4.(b) In establishing or revising electoral districts as required by S.L. 2023-32, the Buncombe County Board of Education shall comply with all requirements of State and federal law.

SECTION 4.(c) Section 6(e) of S.L. 2023-32 reads as rewritten:

"SECTION 6.(e) No later than ~~February 1, 2024~~, June 30, 2024, the Buncombe County Board of Education shall establish the boundaries of the six electoral districts required by this section, to be used in the 2024 elections and thereafter until revised again, in accordance with G.S. 115C-37(i) and this act."

SECTION 4.(d) Notwithstanding Chapters 115C and 163 of the General Statutes, the filing period for the Buncombe County Board of Education in the 2024 election shall be from noon on the third Friday in July until noon on the first Friday in August.

SECTION 4.(e) The Buncombe County Board of Education and the Asheville City Board of Education shall jointly study the feasibility of the merger of the Buncombe County School Administrative Unit and the City of Asheville School Administrative Unit, including the potential economic and educational impact of merging the school units and any other relevant information. The Buncombe County Board of Education and the Asheville City Board of Education shall report findings and recommendations to the standing committees of the General Assembly hearing elections matters no later than February 15, 2025.

PART V. EFFECTIVE DATE

SECTION 5. Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 22nd day of September, 2023.

s/ Phil Berger
President Pro Tempore of the Senate

s/ Tim Moore
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Roy Cooper
Governor

Approved 3:59 p.m. this 29th day of September, 2023