



HOUSE BILL 671: Competitive Speech and Debate Grant Pilot.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Committee:	House Education - K-12. If favorable, re-refer to Appropriations. If favorable, re-refer to Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House	Date:	April 15, 2025
Introduced by:	Reps. Willis, Cotham, Biggs, T. Brown	Prepared by:	Drupti Chauhan
Analysis of:	PCS to First Edition H671-CSRQa-7		Committee Counsel

OVERVIEW: *House Bill 671 would establish a pilot program for grants for competitive speech and debate teams. The Proposed Committee Substitute (PCS) deletes the section which provided for the General Assembly appointing members to the board of directors of the Tarheel Forensic League.*

BILL ANALYSIS: The PCS House Bill 671 would establish the Competitive Speech and Debate Team Grant Pilot Program (Program) to allow each public school serving students in grades 9-12 to form a speech and debate team that can participate in speech and debate competitions. The Program would begin in the 2025-2026 year and conclude at the end of the 2028-2029 school year.

Eligibility and Applications: Any public school unit that includes a school that serves students in grades 9-12 is eligible to apply for the Program to develop, maintain, or expand an educational and competitive speech and debate team. By August 1 of each year that funds are made available for the Program, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) must develop and publish criteria and guidelines for the application process for the Program in the upcoming school year. Applications must be accepted until September 30 of each school year and must include a proposed budget for the speech and debate team.

Award and Use of Funds: DPI must award grants to selected applicants by October 31 of each year that funds are available. DPI must determine the amount of each award of each award up to a maximum of \$10,000 per team per school. Funds can be used for any of the following purposes:

- Provide stipends for coaches. However, only 2 stipends can be included, with one lead team coach stipend of up to \$2,500 and one assistant team coach stipend of \$1,500.
- Make payments associated with participation in a speech and debate league or competition.
- Travel to and from speech and debate competitions.

Requirements: Speech and debate teams receiving funds through the Program must participate in the Tarheel Forensic League and National Speech and Debate Association.

Student Participation: If a student is enrolled in a school that does not offer a speech and debate team, the student is eligible to participate on the speech and debate team at the school located geographically closest to where the student resides that does have a team. A student joining a team would be responsible for transportation to and from the school where the team meets. Nothing would prohibit a student from enforcing guidelines for student participation in extra-curricular activities, such as academic performance requirements. In addition, a speech and debate team would not be prohibited from conducting a selection process for the team as long as the student is able to participate in the selection process as if the student was enrolled in that school.

Kara McCraw
Director



Legislative Analysis
Division
919-733-2578

House 671 PCS

Page 2

Reporting: By February 15 of each that funds are made available for the Program, DPI must report the following information to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division:

- The public school units receiving the grants and the amount of the grants.
- A description of how the grants were used.
- The public school units that applied for the grants but did not receive a grant.
- The extent to which students participating in speech and debate programs funded by the Program experienced measurable improvement in academic performance.

Appropriation: The PCS would appropriate \$500,000 to DPI in nonrecurring funds for the 2025-2026, 2026-2027, 2027-2028, and 2028-2029 fiscal years to establish and administer the Program.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The bill would become effective July 1, 2025, and apply beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.