



2019 Legislative Changes Impacting State Charter Schools

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Introduction

This guidance document is intended to provide an overview of legislative changes from the 2019 Georgia General Assembly Legislative Session that impact state charter schools. The SCSC may monitor for any of the following items during its annual onsite monitoring and throughout the year. State charter schools are encouraged to consult their independent legal counsel for questions regarding the impact of these changes on the operation of your particular school.

Legislative Changes Impacting State Charter School Governance

State Charter School State-Wide Jurisdiction for Open Meetings. Late last year, the SCSC received guidance from the Georgia Attorney General’s Office that state charter schools with statewide attendance zones do not have state-wide jurisdiction within the meaning of the Georgia Open Meetings act, and thus cannot conduct meetings by teleconference. *HB59 expressly clarifies that state charter schools with statewide attendance zones have state-wide jurisdiction under the Georgia Open Meetings Act, and thus can perform meetings by teleconference.*

Reference: [HB59](#) (effective July 1, 2019)

Legislative Changes Impacting State Charter School Operations

Physically Posting DFCS Hotline at School. State charter schools must post in a clearly visible location in a public area of the school that is readily accessible to students a sign in English and other such languages as determined by the school that contains the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) toll-free number to receive reports of child abuse and neglect (1-855-GA CHILD / 1-855-422-4453). This number is operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Reference: [HB12](#) (effective July 1, 2019)

Attendance Zone Residency Determinations. The determination if a student is a resident in the charter school’s attendance zone is made at the time of *enrollment*. For example, if a parent wants their child to attend Shiny Happy People Charter School but resides outside the attendance zone, the child can still apply for *admission* provided the student resides within the attendance zone boundary at the time of actual enrollment (post-lottery). The SCSC defines “enrollment” as the process wherein the student formally accepts an offer of admission and completes the enrollment process. The enrollment process typically involves the student/parent providing relevant information to the school that was not collected on the admissions application (e.g. disability status, emergency contact, immunization records, etc.). State charter schools have the flexibility to set their own enrollment timelines provided the timeline is reasonable and clearly communicated to stakeholders.

Reference: [HB59](#) (effective July 1, 2019)

Enrollment for Students of Active Duty Military Members. Military families are now eligible for enrollment prior to establishing physical residency within the local school system pursuant to presentation of official military orders. In other words, a military family that has received official notice of transfer, may provide such notice in lieu of a residency affidavit for the purposes of application (pre-lottery) or proof of residency for enrollment (post-lottery). Families may be asked to provide proof of residency upon establishing a physical presence within the school system.

Reference: [HB59](#) (effective July 1, 2019)

Cardiac Arrest Prevention. Schools serving grades 6 through 12 must hold an informational meeting twice per year regarding the symptoms and warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest for students participating in interscholastic athletic activities. During these informational meetings, schools must disseminate an information sheet on sudden cardiac arrest symptoms and warning signs to each student's parent or guardian. Schools serving grades 6 through 12 who offer interscholastic athletic activities should consult [SB60](#) for additional requirements regarding preventing cardiac arrests in students while participating in interscholastic athletic activities.

Reference: [SB60](#) (effective July 1, 2019)

School Safety. [SB15](#) would have required schools to 1) submit school safety plans for approval to a local law enforcement agency and GaDOE; 2) conduct safety drills for mass casualty incidents in coordination with local law enforcement agencies; 3) provide annual report to the public for the prior school year of all projects, initiatives, and activities in furtherance of school safety plan; and 4) require principal or designee to serve as school safety coordinator. *SB15 was vetoed by Governor Kemp.*

Mandatory Recess. [HB83](#) would have required that beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, each elementary school to schedule recess for all students in kindergarten through fifth grade during any day where the student did not have a physical education activity. *HB83 was vetoed by Governor Kemp.*

Legislative Changes Impacting State Charter School Finances

Amended FY19 Budget Allocations

School security grants. Allocation of \$69,000,000 - \$30,000 per school - in one-time funds for school security grants. Additional information will be forthcoming from GaDOE.

FY20 Budget Allocations

Increase funds to adjust state base salary schedule. The FY20 budget includes funds to increase salaries for certified teachers and employees by \$3,000 (effective July 1, 2019). This increase will be reflected in the school's QBE allocations based on the data the school reports in CPI to determine the number of certified teachers and staff members.

\$2,000,000 in charter school facility grants. Charter school facility grants were created via HB430 in 2018 but were not appropriated until now. Additional information will be forthcoming from GaDOE.

Legislative Changes Impacting State Charter School Academics

Dyslexia Screening. Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, all schools must screen kindergarten students for characteristics of dyslexia and may screen kindergarten students for other disorders; in the meantime, the SBOE will create guidelines for such screenings, and the Professional Standards Commission will create/refine criteria related to a dyslexia endorsement for classroom teachers.

Reference: [SB48](#) (Most substantive requirements will begin in 2024-2025 SY; legislation goes into effect on July 1, 2019)

Required Computer Science Courses. Provides requirements around computer science classes for middle and high school students. Specifically, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year:

- Each state charter school that serves high school students must offer a course in computer science;
- Each state charter school that serves middle school students must offer instruction in exploratory computer science;
- Each state charter school that serves elementary students may offer instruction in exploratory computer science.

Reference: [SB108](#) (most substantive requirements will begin in 2022-2023 SY; legislation goes into effect on July 1, 2019)