

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2013

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SENATE BILL 120*

Short Title: Internet Access for Public Schools. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Soucek, Hise, Rucho (Primary Sponsors); Apodaca, Barefoot, Bingham, Brock, Brown, Cook, Curtis, Daniel, D. Davis, J. Davis, Jackson, McLaurin, Meredith, Newton, and Randleman.

Referred to: Education/Higher Education.

February 21, 2013

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR AN INVENTORY OF INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT ROBUST DIGITAL LEARNING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND AN INVENTORY OF INTERNET ACCESS IN ALL NORTH CAROLINA COUNTIES, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION STUDY COMMITTEE ON DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Whereas, digital learning is becoming an integral component of a 21st Century education for all students in all schools across North Carolina; and

Whereas, effective digital learning requires a variety of resources, including infrastructure requirements, digital devices, educational software, high-quality teachers, and perhaps most essentially, reliable internet connectivity; and

Whereas, while all LEAs currently have internet access, wireless access on a school building level may be either unavailable or unreliable due to funding or infrastructure limitations; and

Whereas, effective digital learning continues after the school day ends, and access to digital devices and connectivity outside of the school environment are also critical for 21st Century learning; and

Whereas, many local school administrative units (LEAs) report limited connectivity in their students' homes and community; and

Whereas, currently, there is no Statewide estimate on the costs for wireless access and sufficient bandwidth to support robust digital learning on a school building level, nor a detailed inventory of the current bandwidth and wireless capabilities of each LEA at the school building level; Now, therefore,

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) The State Board of Education shall establish a standard for sufficient classroom wireless connectivity for a digital learning environment and conduct an inventory of the wireless access and bandwidth capacity of each public school in the State based on that standard.

The State Board of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and to the Joint Legislative Committee on Information Technology by December 1, 2013, on the inventory results, its recommendations on ways to achieve a sufficient standard of wireless access and bandwidth in all classrooms, and the cost of achieving that standard.



1 **SECTION 1.(b)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
2 Public Instruction the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) for the 2012-2013 fiscal
3 year to implement the provisions of this section.

4 **SECTION 2.** The Department of Commerce shall conduct a survey of currently
5 available and planned community broadband connectivity and identify ways to assist in the
6 expansion of readily accessible internet in all North Carolina counties. The Department shall
7 report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and to the Joint Legislative
8 Committee on Information Technology by December 1, 2013, on the survey results and make
9 recommendations on ways to expand access across the State and the cost of doing so.

10 **SECTION 3.** Section 1(b) of this act becomes effective July 1, 2013. The
11 remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.