

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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SENATE BILL 954

Short Title: Learning & Enrichment in Afterschool Programs. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Chitlik, Mohammed, and Chaudhuri (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

May 4, 2026

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE LEARNING AND ENRICHMENT IN AFTERSCHOOL
3 PROGRAMS ADVISORY COUNCIL AND GRANT PROGRAM.

4 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

5 **SECTION 1.(a)** There is established in Article 3 of Chapter 115C of the General
6 Statutes the following Parts:

7 "Part 1. Department Administration.

8 "Part 2. Learning and Enrichment in Afterschool Programs (LEAP)."

9 **SECTION 1.(b)** G.S. 115C-18 through G.S. 115C-22 shall be located in Part 1 of
10 Article 3 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, as established in subsection (a) of this section.

11 **SECTION 2.** Part 2 of Article 3 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, as
12 established in Section 1 of this act, is amended by adding the following new sections to read:

13 **"§ 115C-23.1. Definitions.**

14 As used in this Part, the following definitions apply:

15 (1) Children and youth. – School-age children up to age 18.

16 (2) Eligible organizations. – Community-based organizations, statewide
17 youth-serving organizations, cities and counties delivering youth programs,
18 and schools delivering youth programs outside of school hours.

19 (3) Positive youth development programming. – Structured programs or activities
20 with engaged adult mentors and evidence-based or evidence-informed
21 practices provided to children and youth before school, after school, or during
22 summer. It does not include basic education programming provided during
23 school hours.

24 **"§ 115C-23.2. Learning and Enrichment in Afterschool Programs (LEAP) Advisory**
25 **Council.**

26 (a) The Department of Public Instruction (Department) shall establish the Learning and
27 Enrichment in Afterschool Programs (LEAP) Advisory Council to provide assistance in
28 implementing the LEAP Grant Program, as authorized under G.S. 115C-23.3. The Advisory
29 Council shall serve in an advisory capacity only and shall not have authority over final grant
30 award decisions, which shall remain with the Department.

31 (b) The Advisory Council shall include, at a minimum, the following members:

32 (1) A representative of the Department, who shall serve as chair.

33 (2) A representative of the Division of Child Development and Early Education
34 of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services.

35 (3) A representative of the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs.



1 (4) A representative of a community-based organization providing afterschool or
2 summer programming, appointed by the Advisory Board of the North
3 Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs.

4 (c) The Department shall convene the Advisory Council on a regular basis, as determined
5 necessary, to carry out its duties. The Department shall provide administrative support to the
6 Advisory Council.

7 (d) The Advisory Council shall advise the Department on the following:

8 (1) Grant application materials, scoring criteria, and selection processes.

9 (2) Strategies to prioritize rural and underserved communities and strengthen
10 partnerships between schools and community-based organizations.

11 (3) Program quality standards, technical assistance, and professional
12 development supports.

13 (4) Evaluation findings and improvements to program design and
14 implementation.

15 (5) Identifying opportunities to align this program with other State and local
16 initiatives, including early childhood, workforce development, and student
17 support services.

18 **"§ 115C-23.3. Learning and Enrichment in Afterschool Programs (LEAP) Grant Program.**

19 (a) There is established under the control and direction of the State Board of Education
20 the Learning and Enrichment in Afterschool Programs (LEAP) Fund. This fund shall be a
21 nonreverting special revenue fund consisting of any monies appropriated to it by the General
22 Assembly, eligible federal funds, eligible grant funds, and private donations. Any funds received
23 by the State pursuant to litigation against social media companies for harm caused to children
24 and youth, whether the result of a settlement or court award, shall be directed to the LEAP Fund.
25 LEAP Funds shall be distributed through a grant program in accordance with this section.

26 (b) The Department of Public Instruction (Department) shall establish the Learning and
27 Enrichment in Afterschool Programs (LEAP) Grant Program (Program) to assist eligible
28 organizations in providing high-quality positive youth development programming across the
29 State. To the extent funds are made available for this purpose, the Department shall administer
30 the Program in accordance with this section.

31 (c) The Department, in consultation with the LEAP Advisory Council, as established
32 under G.S. 115C-23.2, shall develop and publish the following:

33 (1) An application and application time line.

34 (2) Technical assistance guides for completing the application. The Department
35 shall also offer further technical assistance for the application process to
36 first-time applicants and applicants that serve rural or underserved
37 communities.

38 (3) An awardee selection time line and selection criteria. The selection criteria
39 shall aim to ensure equitable distribution of funding across the State by
40 considering the following in evaluating applicants:

41 a. The extent to which an eligible organization's positive youth
42 development programming reflects the needs of the local community.

43 b. Whether the eligible organization serves children and youth in rural,
44 underserved, or economically distressed communities.

45 c. The eligible organization's demonstrated experience serving children,
46 youth, and families.

47 d. Any existing relationships the eligible organization maintains, as
48 evidenced through memoranda of understanding or similar
49 agreements.

50 e. The demonstrated need of the community to be served.

- 1 f. The eligible organization's organizational capacity to implement and
2 sustain positive youth development programming, including staffing,
3 financial management, and partnership infrastructure.
4 (4) Grant terms and amounts. The Department may offer different terms and
5 amounts for different grants, so long as no grant awards funding for more than
6 two years per grant.
7 (5) Grant renewal criteria. Grants shall be continually renewable, contingent upon
8 meeting renewal criteria and availability of funds. The Department shall
9 determine the criteria that must be met to renew a grant. At a minimum, the
10 renewal criteria shall include compliance with Program requirements and
11 evaluation benchmarks based on the programming evaluation metrics
12 developed under subdivision (6) of this subsection.
13 (6) Programming evaluation metrics. An evaluation of the effectiveness of a
14 positive youth development program shall include at least the following:
15 a. Attendance and participation rates.
16 b. Development outcomes, including academics, skills,
17 career-awareness, and workforce readiness.
18 c. Community and family engagement.
19 d. Program reach, including the number of Program sites and number of
20 children and youth served.
21 (d) Awards received by eligible organizations shall supplement and not supplant any
22 existing funds used for positive youth development programming.
23 (e) The Department may retain up to ten percent (10%) of funds appropriated for the
24 Program for administrative costs and support activities, including any of the following:
25 (1) Hiring or contracting for a full-time equivalent (FTE) position to administer
26 and oversee the Program.
27 (2) Developing and disseminating programming quality standards, performance
28 measures, and evaluation tools to ensure accountability and continuous
29 improvement.
30 (3) Providing training, technical assistance, and professional development to
31 eligible organizations.
32 (4) Advising eligible organizations on the implementation of evidence-based
33 practices.
34 (5) Contracting with the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs to
35 coordinate statewide system-building efforts, conduct research, deliver
36 professional development, or provide technical assistance to eligible
37 organizations.
38 (f) The Department may partner with academic institutions, nonprofit technical
39 assistance providers, and other relevant organizations, such as the North Carolina Center for
40 Afterschool Programs, to deliver the services required under this section, including for
41 programming evaluation."

42 **SECTION 3.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
43 Public Instruction the sum of nineteen million five hundred thousand dollars (\$19,500,000) in
44 nonrecurring funds for the 2026-2027 fiscal year for the Department to establish the LEAP Fund
45 and LEAP Grant Program, as enacted by this act.

46 **SECTION 4.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2026.