

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2025

FILED SENATE  
Apr 30, 2026  
S.B. 954  
PRINCIPAL CLERK

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SENATE BILL DRS55029-NHa-217A

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

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

Referred to:

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.



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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.