

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023

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SENATE BILL DRS15422-NEa-153

Short Title: Protect Our Schools.

(Public)

Sponsors: Senators Batch, Smith, and Grafstein (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT DIRECTING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO IDENTIFY
3 SCHOOL WALK ZONES, SETTING LOWER SPEED LIMITS IN SCHOOL WALK
4 ZONES, CREATING AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS TO THE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY
5 ENHANCEMENT FUND, AND INCREASING CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR
6 INJURING A MINOR IN A CROSSWALK, SCHOOL ZONE, OR SCHOOL WALK
7 ZONE.

8 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

9 SECTION 1.(a) G.S. 20-4.01 reads as rewritten:

10 "§ 20-4.01. Definitions.

11 Unless the context requires otherwise, the following definitions apply throughout this
12 Chapter to the defined words and phrases and their cognates:

13 ...

14 (39a) School Walk Zone. – An area within a school zone, identified by the
15 Department pursuant to G.S. 20-141.1, that is likely to sustain pedestrian
16 traffic sufficient to render the speed limits designated in G.S. 20-141 unsafe.

17"

18 SECTION 1.(b) G.S. 20-141.1 reads as rewritten:

19 "§ 20-141.1. Speed limits in school ~~zones~~ zones and school walk zones.

20 (a) Optional Lower Speed Limits. – The Board of Transportation or local authorities
21 within their respective jurisdictions may, by ordinance, set speed limits lower than those
22 designated in G.S. 20-141 for areas adjacent to or near a public, private or parochial school.

23 (b) Mandatory Lower Speed Limits. – The Department of Transportation shall annually
24 consult with the governing body of each public school unit and each nonpublic school operating
25 pursuant to Part 1 or Part 2 of Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes to designate
26 school walk zones. In all designated school walk zones the Department shall (i) set speed limits
27 lower than those designated in G.S. 20-141 and (ii) ensure appropriate actions are taken to
28 effectuate the reduced speed limit.

29 (c) Implementation Requirements. – Limits set pursuant to this section shall become
30 effective when signs are erected giving notice of the school ~~zone~~, or school walk zone, the
31 authorized speed limit, and the days and hours when the lower limit is effective, or by erecting
32 signs giving notice of the school ~~zone~~, or school walk zone, the authorized speed limit and which
33 indicate the days and hours the lower limit is effective by an electronic flasher operated with a
34 time clock. Limits set pursuant to this section may be enforced only on days when school is in
35 session, and no speed limit below 20 miles per hour may be set under the authority of this section.

36 A



1 (d) Penalty. – Unless covered under some other provision of law providing greater
2 punishment, a person who drives who:

3 (1) Drives a motor vehicle in a school zone or school walk zone at a speed greater
4 than the speed limit set and posted under this section is responsible for an
5 infraction and is required to pay a penalty of two hundred fifty dollars
6 (\$250.00).

7 (2) Drives a motor vehicle in a school zone or school walk zone without due care
8 resulting in injury to a minor is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor."

9 **SECTION 1.(c)** G.S. 20-173 reads as rewritten:

10 **"§ 20-173. Pedestrians' right-of-way at crosswalks.**

11 ...

12 (d) Unless covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, a
13 person who drives a motor vehicle in a school zone or school walk zone at a speed greater than
14 the speed limit set and posted under this section is responsible for an infraction and is required
15 to pay a penalty of two hundred fifty dollars (\$250.00). If the violation results in injury to a
16 minor, the person is guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor."

17 **SECTION 2.(a)** The Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Fund is established as a special
18 fund within the Department of Transportation to be administered by the Department. The purpose
19 of this fund is to support pedestrian safety initiatives.

20 **SECTION 2.(b)** There is appropriated from the Highway Fund to the Department of
21 Transportation for the 2024-2025 fiscal year the sum of ten million dollars (\$10,000,000) in
22 nonrecurring funds to be allocated to the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Fund established in
23 Section 2(a) of this act. The Department shall allocate these funds as follows:

24 (1) Five million dollars (\$5,000,000) for assessing areas likely to be designated
25 school walk zones and for infrastructure improvements within those areas.

26 (2) Two million dollars (\$2,000,000) for developing and implementing training
27 for school crosswalk guards.

28 (3) Three million dollars (\$3,000,000) to increase public awareness regarding
29 pedestrian safety. This public awareness campaign shall (i) focus on educating
30 the public about pending school walk zones and (ii) promote community
31 engagement to raise awareness and encourage responsible driving in school
32 zones and school walk zones.

33 **SECTION 2.(c)** This section becomes effective July 1, 2024.

34 **SECTION 3.** Except as otherwise provided, this act becomes effective December 1,
35 2024, and applies to offenses committed on or after that date.