

Legislation Curbs Growth of Dual Enrollment Costs | Bill Analysis: House Bill 444 (LC 33 7896S)

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Between FY 2016 and FY 2019 costs for Georgia's Dual Enrollment program doubled as more students participated, growing from \$49 million to \$105 million. House Bill 444 clarifies program goals and adds so-called guard rails that restrict courses to older high school students, codify credit hour caps and restrict summer term courses. The bill also limits the program's general state fund appropriations and opens the door to funding the program through the lottery.

In Dual Enrollment, the state uses general funds to pay colleges fixed amounts for tuition, mandatory fees and books so that high school students can take college courses for free. Currently, students enrolled in 9th-12th grades who meet requirements can take college courses during any academic term. (For more information, read ["Dual Enrollment Explained."](#))

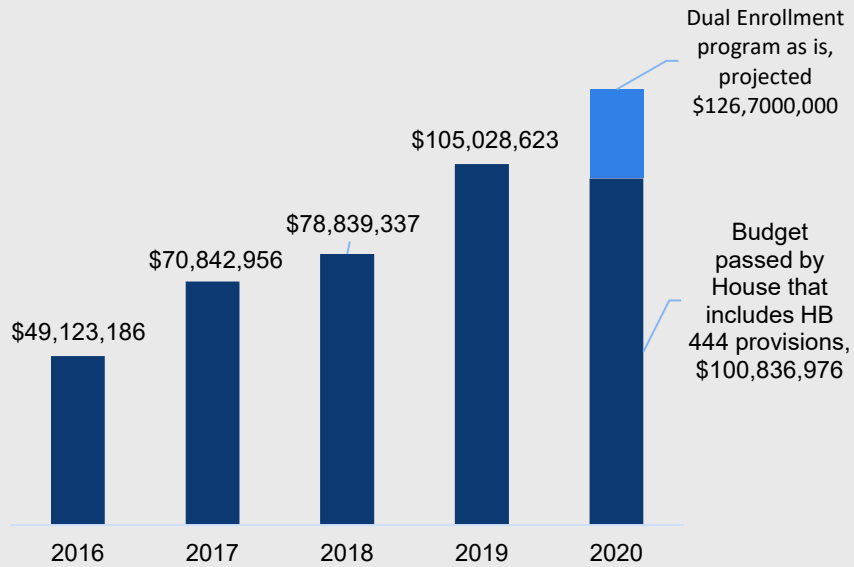
HB 444 raises questions that lawmakers should weigh carefully. How can the state control the cost and sustainably fund Dual Enrollment? What is the purpose of the program, and is the current structure fulfilling that purpose? And what policies are needed to ensure it produces the desired educational outcomes for students and the state?

Cost

The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget has not yet released a fiscal note on HB 444. However, the House passed the FY 2020 budget (HB 31) that includes the same major policy changes as HB 444. The budget allocates \$100.8 million for Dual Enrollment, a \$4.2 million decrease from FY 2019. The Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) projects that the total cost of Dual Enrollment will be \$126.7 million in FY 2020 if lawmakers do nothing. If signed into law, this budget would represent the first decrease in funding since lawmakers revised the program in 2016.

House Bill 444 also opens up lottery funds to Dual Enrollment, which is not accounted for in the the FY 2020 budget. This is a significant funding change to the program which now relies only on state general funds. However, between 2004 and 2012, the state has paid for Dual Enrollment with lottery funds and also used lottery funds through the Accel program and HOPE grants to pay college tuition for high school students.

HB 444 Provisions Projected to Reduce State Funding for Dual Enrollment



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Source: FY 2016-2019 budgets, FY 2020 budget in House Bill 31, Georgia Student Finance Commission projections

HB 444 Limits State Funds to Dual Enrollment, but Opens Lottery Funds to Dual Enrollment

The bill limits Dual Enrollment to:

- 10th, 11th and 12th graders taking technical college courses.
- 11th and 12th graders taking courses at eligible public, private and for-profit colleges.

These policy changes affect about 6 percent of participants. In FY 2018, about 1,300 students enrolled in 9th and 10th grades took courses in the university system, and 1,350 students enrolled in 9th grade took courses in technical colleges. Nearly 44,000 high school students participated in total.

The bill also seeks to limit state funds while opening up lottery funds for Dual Enrollment. It creates the following new policies:

- 30-hour total cap for state-funded credit hours with lottery funds paying for additional hours, if a student chooses.
- 16-hour per-semester cap.
- No state-funded summer courses, with lottery funds paying for summer courses if a student chooses.¹

Currently, students take an average 12.7 total credit hours and a median of 6 credit hours per semester. The current program allows for full-year enrollment.

The state will continue to pay for tuition and fees if students want to take courses outside of these limitations but the funding source changes to lottery dollars. Lottery funds used for Dual Enrollment will count against students' potential maximum award of 127 semester hours for HOPE scholarships and grants, though course grades will not count in grade calculations for HOPE eligibility. Students can choose to pay for courses out-of-pocket if they do not want to pre-emptively spend dollars that could affect their HOPE scholarships or grants.

For example, if a student wants to take a summer Dual Enrollment course for free, the funding would come from lottery. The Georgia Student Finance Commission would include this course in the student's maximum award of 127 semester hours if the students qualify for and use lottery dollars through HOPE scholarships or grants. Similarly, if a student

¹ The state does not allot funds for summer courses to school districts in the K-12 funding formula.

reached the 30-hour cap but wanted to keep participating, the student could do so but the funding source would shift from the state to the lottery.

HB 444 Clarifies Dual Enrollment's Purpose

A 2018 audit report recommended that the state clarify Dual Enrollment's goals to better shape policies and evaluate outcomes. HB 444 defines the following as the program objectives:

- Provide qualified high school students with access to rigorous career and academic courses at higher education institutions.
- Increase high school graduation rates.
- Shorten the time to postsecondary degree completion.
- Prepare a skilled workforce.

[A 2017 report from the Governor's Office of Student Achievement](#) found that students who participated in Dual Enrollment from 2008 to 2016 (before the current version of the program) were more likely to graduate from high school, enroll in college and graduate from college than nonparticipating students. But the report could not conclude whether Dual Enrollment contributed to these outcomes, stating "More rigorous research is needed to determine whether those differences are more the result of participating in Dual Enrollment or a reflection of the characteristics of the students who dually enroll."

HB 444 Adds Advising Requirement, Makes Other Changes

HB 444 requires students to meet with an academic adviser or counselor from the college before beginning Dual Enrollment and after attempting 15 and 30 credit hours; codifies removal of transportation grants that were cut in previous budgets; and directs GSFC to measure and evaluate the program annually. The bill also codifies the requirement that instructors who teach courses on high school campuses must be college faculty or high school teachers contracted as adjunct faculty.

The bill language also allows GSFC and the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget to differentiate future rates paid to colleges based on their classification as public, private or proprietary schools, and whether the course is taught at a high school campus, college campus or online. The Georgia Student and Finance Commission already differentiates rates by school: current Dual Enrollment rates are \$250 per credit hour for private colleges, \$89 per credit hour in technical colleges and a range of \$92.67 to \$333.60 per credit hour based on the tuition charged by each school. HB 444 states that rates paid to

private colleges shall never decrease. Current school-based rates are the same for all course delivery methods: high school, college or online.

Policy Considerations: Tracking Impact on Lottery Funds and Students

If HB 444 becomes law, future budgets should track the lottery funds used for Dual Enrollment. Including lottery-funded courses in the HOPE awards cap should limit the impact to lottery funds. Still, students who may not use lottery funds in college, either because they would not qualify for HOPE or decide to attend college out-of-state, could take Dual Enrollment courses using lottery funds. Because students could affect their future potential HOPE awards, it is critical that these courses count toward students' graduation requirements.

Colleges, high schools and GSFC should prioritize implementation. The changes sought by this bill require communications to students, parents, school counselors and college advisors to ensure students and parents have accurate information to make decisions. Chief among the need for smooth implementation is the addition of the advising requirement. Many colleges struggle with limited advising capacity even without Dual Enrollment participants. Students will need access to college advisers that can help inform the best course forward. Advising will be especially important when students make decisions that could affect their potential HOPE award. High school students will need an easy way to check how many hours of a potential HOPE award they are using and potential consequences of using these hours.

Last, if HB 444 becomes law, Georgia should conduct a high-quality evaluation to ensure the balance between cost concerns and Dual Enrollment's education goals. A high-cost program can still be efficient if it is effective in accomplishing the stated goals of increasing high school graduation rates, shortening the time to postsecondary degree completion and preparing a skilled workforce.

A detailed evaluation that includes information on student populations with lower graduation rates, including male, low-income, black and Latino students will help policymakers assess how well Dual Enrollment is accomplishing its goals and refine the program to better achieve those goals. Evaluating different models of Dual Enrollment (i.e. delivery method, course timing, instructor qualifications and other factors) will also help high schools and colleges refine programs to improve student learning and graduation outcomes.



Cost alone should not be a reason to reform a program, and policymakers should consider ongoing analysis and evaluation to ensure Dual Enrollment is meeting its intended purposes.