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State Board of Education to Address Graduation and Teacher Candidate Requirements Amid Public Health Crisis

Today the State Board of Education announced that the Board will convene a special called electronic meeting April 9th at 2:00 PM CDT to enact emergency rules governing K-12 graduation requirements for Tennessee's high school seniors in response to the ongoing COVID-19 public health crisis.

"Our Board takes our responsibility to students, educators, and districts very seriously, especially in times such as these," said Ms. Lillian Hartgrove, chair of the State Board of Education. "Our members and staff are standing by to make this process as smooth and transparent as possible under these circumstances."

During the special called meeting, members of the Board will also address guidance regarding licensure issuance for teacher candidates set to complete their educator preparation programs during the 2019-2020 school year. Current educator preparation rules require student teachers to obtain 15 weeks of classroom teaching time. However, school closures across the state may prohibit teacher candidates from completing these requirements.

"The State Board of Education serves as a bridge between the state legislature and local school districts," said Ms. Hartgrove. "We will work to clarify expectations as set forth in the statute so that every school district understands the expectations for this unprecedented school year."

State Board staff members are currently working with members of the Board and other education stakeholders to ensure that the emergency rule is clear to local school districts and that it will address their areas of concern.

House Bill 2818 also grants the commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education, Dr. Penny Schwinn, the authority to waive the 180-day attendance requirement for K-12 public school students. The new legislation also waives the civics test requirement for high school seniors on track to graduate in 2020.

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Additional information, including meeting materials and information regarding the virtual special called meeting, will be posted on the State Board website as it becomes available at www.tn.gov/sbe.

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The Tennessee State Board of Education is a ten-member, governor-appointed and legislatively confirmed board charged under the law with rulemaking and policymaking for K-12 education. Through a close partnership with the Tennessee Department of Education, the Board maintains oversight in K-12 implementation and academic standards.