An Act

ENROLLED HOUSE

BILL NO. _____________, By: proposed to

Nichols (Monroe) of the House

and

_________ of the Senate

KNOWN AS THE:

OKLAHOMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LONG-TERM INVESTMENT ACT

A proposed act relating to legislative rules, policy, revenue, tariffs and taxation to promote quality jobs and long-term economic development in Oklahoma.

Be it recognized that:

1. As the world rapidly transitions to a knowledge-based global market, Oklahoma’s economic future rests on the level of education, health and mental health of its children.
2. To be well educated, one must be healthy. To be healthy, one must be well educated.
3. Over the past 10 years, while other states have recognized the importance of the knowledge economy and increased their level of spending per pupil, Oklahoma has divested in K-12 public education more than any state.
4. Dramatic cutbacks in K-12 school funding has forced many Oklahoma school districts to resort to 4-day school weeks. In the past year, the number of 4-day public schools in Oklahoma doubled to 91. Schools with 4-day school weeks have lower academic scores than 5-day school week school districts.
5. The impact of this divestment in K-12 education has been significant and includes dramatically worse standardized test score averages, flight of Oklahoma public school teachers to other states and the need for more than 1,100 emergency teacher certifications each year.
6. The recruitment of new businesses to Oklahoma has been derailed by the current state of Oklahoma’s K-12 education system.
7. Oklahoma ranks among the bottom 5 of US States in all measures of health, mental health and addiction illnesses.
8. Most notable among these health measures is Oklahoma’s high rates of early death, suicide and opioid and methamphetamine drug overdoses.
9. Oklahoma has chosen to not expand Medicaid coverage for its lowest income families, while other states have improved their percentage of citizens with health care insurance coverage.
10. Oklahoma is faced with significant access to care and physician shortages, particularly in rural Oklahoma where 3 hospitals have closed in the past 24 months.
11. Funding of State of Oklahoma core services are strongly tied to Oklahoma’s oil and gas production. It is vital for Oklahoma to expand its economic base beyond the energy industry to the global market and the emerging knowledge economy.
12. China has the world’s largest population and the world’s second largest economy and will soon surpass the US as the world’s largest economy. It is vital that Oklahoma prepares for economic trade with the world’s largest population and economy.

THE OKLAHOMA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LONG-TERM INVESTMENT ACT was generated by the freshman students of the University of Tulsa’s Presidential Leaders Fellowship. This Bill proposes new policies, programs and revenue generation to improve the economic future of Oklahoma by new investment in K-12 education programs, illness prevention, wellness, health workforce and increased economic trade at the global level with a focus on China.

It is recognized that this Bill is comprehensive and proposes multiple sources of new revenue generation. It is recognized that:

a. This Bill requires 75% majority for passage in the House and Senate.
b. This will require components of this Bill to be split into individual Bills to avoid claims of “log rolling.”
c. This Bill proposes new levels of local control regarding funding of education and that new legislative rules regarding the constraints of “pre-emption” must be enacted.
SECTION 1. EDUCATION

PART I - THE 5TH DAY INITIATIVE

The 5th Day Initiative is a stop-gap measure to backfill educational experiences on Fridays for K-12 students in school districts with 4-day school weeks. Organized through a consortium of community non-profits, local universities and local school districts, a 5th day of educational offerings are offered to K-12 students. Non-profits such as churches, YMCAs, universities, university students as teacher volunteers and after school programs would provide online and in person educational sessions.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS REQUIRED:

a. Certification process for university student teacher volunteers by Oklahoma Office of Educational Quality and Accountability (OEQA).
b. Tax credits would be provided to those helping to fund after school programs and for volunteers.
c. Require school districts to be informed about the “Fifth day Program.”
d. The 5th Day School Partnerships will receive up to six projectors and six monitors for streaming additional teaching by university student teachers on Fridays where elementary schools don’t have a fifth day of school.
e. School holds the projectors and gives them to a non-profit organization.
f. For those children without internet capacity at home and needing supervision, bus students to the non-profit instead of school.
g. One volunteer is recruited per section or room to supervise kids.
h. For 4 hours (a half day) 4 classes are given over the internet, one from each school (Math, English, Science, History).
i. Buses take the kids back home or to after-care programs.
j. University student teacher volunteers receive college course credit and state-supported Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education college scholarships for participation.
k. The University of Tulsa’s Department of Education and True Blue Neighbors would serve as the first pilot program for the 5th Day Initiative.
PART II - LOCAL BOND ISSUE FLEXIBILITY TO FUND SCHOOL OPERATIONS.

Currently, local bond initiatives can be issued for capital projects within local school districts. But there are restrictions on local taxation and bond issues to be applied to local school operations (pre-emption.)

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS REQUIRED:

a. Allow local school districts, municipalities and counties to allow elections for bond issues to apply funding directly to their school needs and operations.

PART III. - CHARTER SCHOOL AND PARTNERSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT FLEXIBILITY

Charter schools and partnership school districts have been successful in tailoring education programs to meet the needs of specific neighborhoods and communities (e.g. KIPP schools.) Current state legislation and policy are onerous in establishing, operating and funding of charter school and partnership school districts.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS REQUIRED:

a. Remove the barriers to establishing and ongoing funding of charter schools and partnership school districts.
   b. Tulsa’s Kendall Whittier Elementary School, Will Rogers High School, and the University of Tulsa would serve as a pilot partnership school district within Tulsa Public Schools District.

SECTION 2. HEALTH

A comprehensive approach to Oklahoma’s health is required including addressing improvements in wellness and habits of health of Oklahoma’s children, tobacco use prevention and cessation and improved access to care particularly in underserved rural and urban areas.

It is recognized that marijuana, although not harmless, has similar detriments to long-term health to other legal and taxed substances e.g. alcohol and tobacco. Among highly addicted opioid abusers, Marijuana has proven to be a far safer alternative drug of abuse to the highly deadly abuse of opioids.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS REQUIRED

b. Establish 1.5 credits per semester physical education requirement for grades 9-12. Sports, spirit squad and marching band participation serves as credit for this requirement.

c. A semester each of middle school and high school health and wellness classes established.

d. Through the Oklahoma State Department of Health, local seminars on tobacco use, poor eating habits and healthy lifestyles.

e. Through Medicaid and commercial health plans, provide reimbursement to clinicians for assisting patients with preventive health measures. Funding for this would be through an increase in Oklahoma’s tax on all tobacco and nicotine products (vaping.)

f. State-supported scholarships for students that commit to medical school and to practice medicine in Oklahoma. Funding for this would be provided by the legalization and taxation of recreational use of marijuana.

g. State-supported financial aid to rural hospitals to assist with maintaining access to care in rural Oklahoma. Funding for this would be through an increase in Oklahoma’s tax on all tobacco and nicotine products (vaping.)

SECTION 3. OKLAHOMA, UNITED STATES AND CHINA TRADE AGREEMENT

As an effort to expand and diversify Oklahoma’s economy in the global market, Oklahoma elected officials, the business community and universities commit to the following to improve trade with China:

a. Support the lowering of tariffs by both the USA and China.

b. Lower the US corporate tax rates.

c. Increasing US tax rate on US companies that outsource work to other countries.

d. Increase cross-cultural interactions specifically with Chinese government, businesses and universities.