

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5915

---

As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Education, February 28, 1995

**Title:** An act relating to keeping students in school.

**Brief Description:** Addressing problems of truancy.

**Sponsors:** Senators McAuliffe and Winsley.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Education: 2/23/95, 2/28/95 [DPA].

---

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McAuliffe, Chair; Pelz, Vice Chair; Finkbeiner, Gaspard, Hochstatter, Johnson and Rasmussen.

**Staff:** Leslie Goldstein (786-7424)

**Background:** Generally students between 8 and 18 must attend public school, be home-schooled, or attend an approved private school. School districts are required to take a number of steps to keep students in school, including notifying parents of unexcused absences, scheduling conferences, and adjusting the students' school program or helping the family get needed services. If a student has five unexcused absences, the district may request a court order. Districts must report steps taken to enforce the attendance laws.

School officials are personally liable for failure to carry out their duties to enforce the school attendance laws and may be fined.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** Truancy is defined as five unexcused absences from school. Truancy is a misdemeanor. The remedies provided by the courts may include diversion agreements where the student agrees to meet certain agreed upon conditions instead of being prosecuted.

The age when truant students may be taken into custody is increased from 14 to 18. Districts or counties may create programs for students who are truant and taken into custody.

Courts can sentence parents of truant youth to community service in their children's schools. If a parent fails to comply with a court order, the parent's name shall be made part of the public record.

Prosecuting attorneys are encouraged to use volunteer attorneys to prosecute truancy cases.

Students under the age of 18 must prove compliance with the compulsory attendance laws to be eligible for drivers' licenses. Drivers' licenses may be revoked if students are truant.

Community networks must put a priority on coordinating efforts to prevent truancy and returning truant students to school. The community networks plans may provide for the community-based home visitor program to provide service coordination and parent education and support to help keep children in school.

**Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill:** A technical change is made creating parallel language in two sections regarding the placement of truant youth.

If a parent fails to comply with a court order, the parent's name becomes part of the public record.

Proof of compliance with the compulsory attendance laws must accompany the application by a minor for a driver's license, but is not part of the application.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Testimony For:** This bill offers a number of positive solutions to the problem of truancy. Roles of schools and courts are clearly outlined. Truancy is clearly a community problem. This makes the laws tougher.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** PRO: Roger Valdez, WSSDA; Karen Brumhaver, WSPTA; John Kvamme, Tacoma Public Schools; Walter Ball, AWSP; Barbara Mertens, WASA; Donna Salcedo Seattle Schools; Judy Hartmann, WEA.