

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6570

As Passed House - Amended:

February 29, 2000

Title: An act relating to judicial authority in truancy petitions.

Brief Description: Providing additional judicial authority in truancy petitions.

Sponsors: Senators Hargrove, Costa and Long.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 2/23/00, 2/24/00 [DPA].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 2/29/00, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

(As Amended by House Committee)

- When ordering a truant student to attend school, the court may set minimum school attendance requirements, including addressing suspensions.
- Juvenile courts are granted explicit authority to order a minor who has tested positive for drug or alcohol use to abstain from further use of drugs and alcohol and to adhere to recommendations of the drug assessment (at no cost to the school).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Quall, Democratic Co-Chair; Talcott, Republican Co-Chair; Haigh, Democratic Vice Chair; Schindler, Republican Vice Chair; Cox; Keiser; Rockefeller; Santos; D. Schmidt; Schual-Berke; Stensen; Thomas and Wensman.

Staff: Charlie Gavigan (786-7340).

Background:

The compulsory attendance law requires children at least 8 years old and under 18 years old to attend public school unless the child is receiving home-based instruction, is attending an approved private school, is attending an education center, is excused by the school district, or is 16 years old and is emancipated. A 6- or 7-year old who chooses to enrolled in a public school is also required to attend.

If a child has the responsibility but fails to attend school without justification, the school must take certain actions, including notifying the parent, scheduling a parent conference, and other steps to reduce the child's absences. If the efforts of the school and the parents do not reduce the child's absences, the school district must file a truancy petition with the juvenile court no later than the seventh unexcused absence in a month or the 10th unexcused absence during a school year.

Juvenile courts hearing truancy petitions may order a truant student to meet court imposed obligations, including attending school and being tested for use of drugs and alcohol.

Summary of Amended Bill:

When ordering a truant student to attend school, the court may set minimum school attendance requirements, including addressing suspensions. Juvenile courts are granted explicit authority to order a minor who has tested positive for drug or alcohol use to abstain from further use of drugs and alcohol and to adhere to recommendations of the drug assessment (at no cost to the school).

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: This bill is necessary to clarify the court's authority regarding truancy petitions to set minimum attendance requirements that deal with suspensions. Courts should also be able to require truant students with drug or alcohol problems to get treatment.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (In support) Greg Williamson, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; and Joe Pope, Association of Washington School Principals.