
Education Committee

HB 1283

Brief Description: Changing compulsory school attendance requirements for children six and seven years of age.

Sponsors: Representatives Maxwell, Stonier, Johnson, Hunt, Reykdal, Bergquist, Sawyer, Pollet, Cody, Kagi, Roberts, Orwall, Lytton, Jenkins and Ryu.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Reduces compulsory school attendance from age eight to age six.
- Eliminates the requirement that school districts take certain actions, including filing a civil action against parents, when enrolled six and seven year olds have a certain number of unexcused absences.
- Specifies that parents whose children receive home-based instruction must only perform certain duties for children eight years old and older.

Hearing Date: 1/31/13

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Washington's compulsory attendance law states that the parents of any child from eight to 17 years of age must cause the child to attend public school. There are exceptions to this law:

1. for children who are enrolled in an approved private school;
2. for children receiving home-based instruction where the parent has filed an intent to provide home-based instruction with the school district as provided by law;
3. if the school district superintendent excuses the child from attendance due to a physical or mental inability to attend, attendance at a residential or correctional facility, or temporary absence; or
4. if the student is at least 16 and has already completed a GED, or is working and the parent agrees that the student should not be required to attend.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

School districts must make educational programs available to all students aged five through 21 until they complete a high school diploma. If parents enroll students who are six or seven in public school, those students must attend school on the basis for which they are enrolled, either full-time or part-time. A student who is required to attend public school and has unexcused absences is considered truant. The truancy laws require a series of parent notifications and interventions by the district, including that truancy petitions be filed with the juvenile court alleging that the parent, the student, or both are violating the compulsory attendance law.

Parents whose children receive home-based instruction have certain duties, including the duty to file a declaration of intent to provide home-based instruction, to prevent school districts from taking actions against either the child or parent based on the truancy laws.

The minimum age of compulsory attendance in Washington has been eight since 1901.

As of 2010, the minimum ages of compulsory attendance in other states were as follows:

- Age 8: two states including Washington;
- Age 7: 16 states;
- Age 6: 24 states; and
- Age 5: nine states.

Summary of Bill:

Compulsory school attendance is lowered from age eight to age six.

School districts are no longer required to perform certain duties related to six and seven year olds who are enrolled in school and have unexcused absences. One of the duties no longer required is for school districts to file a civil action against parents after seven unexcused absences in a month or ten unexcused absences in a year of an enrolled six or seven year old.

School districts are still required to inform the parents or guardians of six or seven year old students, request a conference with parents or guardians, and take steps to eliminate or reduce the child's absences.

The duties of parents whose children receive home-based instruction to prevent application of the truancy laws apply only to parents whose children are eight years old or older.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.