

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5850

As of January 30, 2024

Title: An act relating to supporting students who are chronically absent and at risk for not graduating high school.

Brief Description: Supporting students who are chronically absent and at risk for not graduating high school.

Sponsors: Senators Braun, Wellman, Frame, Hasegawa, Hunt, Kuderer, Mullet, Randall, Torres, Valdez and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/11/24, 1/17/24 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 1/30/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires each educational service district (ESD) to develop and maintain the capacity to offer training and coaching for staff on early warning systems to identify and locate students who are chronically absent and connect them with the necessary supports, subject to appropriations.
- Directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to establish a grant program for community-based organizations and tribes to support students who are chronically absent, subject to appropriations.
- Requires OSPI to allocate funding to ESDs, school districts, and public schools to help eliminate barriers to high school completion for students enrolled in a statewide dropout reengagement program, subject to appropriations.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

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

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair; Wilson, C., Vice Chair; Hawkins, Ranking Member; Dozier, Hunt and Mullet.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators McCune and Pedersen.

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Trevor Press (786-7446)

Background: Staff Addressing Excessive Absenteeism and Truancy. State law requires school districts to designate and identify to the local juvenile court and to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) a person or persons to coordinate efforts to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, including tasks associated with:

- entering into a memorandum of understanding with the juvenile court and establishing protocols;
- coordinating trainings, outreach, and conferences;
- sharing evidence-based and culturally appropriate promising practices;
- identifying a person within every school to serve as a contact with respect to excessive absenteeism and truancy; and
- assisting in the recruitment of community engagement board members.

Statewide Dropout Reengagement Program. State law provides a framework for a statewide dropout reengagement system to provide appropriate educational opportunities. A dropout reengagement program means an educational program that offers at least the following instruction and services:

- academic instruction;
- case management, academic and career counseling, and assistance with accessing services and resources that support at-risk youth and reduce barriers to educational success; and
- the opportunity for qualified students to enroll in college courses that lead to a postsecondary degree or certification if the program provider is a community or technical college.

Eligible students are:

- at least 16 but less than 21;
- not accumulating sufficient credits toward a high school diploma to reasonably complete a diploma before age 21 or is recommended by case managers; and
- enrolled in a school district where they reside, enrolled in an institutional education program; or a nonresident school district.

OSPI must develop a model interlocal agreement and contract for the dropout reengagement system and school districts may enter into these agreement with an educational service district (ESD), community or technical college, or other public entity. The model agreement must include uniform financial reimbursement rates, per full-time equivalent eligible student enrolled in a dropout reengagement program, calculated using a certain formula.

Summary of Bill: Chronically Absent Students. Students who are chronically absent means students who miss 10 percent or more of their school days for any reason including excused and unexcused absences and suspensions.

Educational Service District Training and Coaching. Subject to appropriations, each ESD must develop and maintain the capacity to offer training and coaching for staff, including staff designated to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, on the development of robust early warning systems to identify and locate students who are chronically absent and connect them with the necessary supports to reengage them in academic learning. The training and coaching must include collecting, analyzing, and reporting early warning data.

Grant Program to Support Chronically Absent Students. Subject to appropriations, OSPI must establish a grant program to support students who are chronically absent. Community-based organizations and tribes may apply for these grants.

Grant funds may be used for the following:

- proactive engagement with families;
- clear, supportive, and solution-oriented communication;
- visits to families of students who are chronically absent;
- academic, systemic, and economic supports; and
- incentives and celebrations of improved attendance and engagement.

OSPI may adopt rules to implement the grant program and may require the recipient of grant funding to report the impacts of the recipient's efforts in alignment with the measures of the Washington School Improvement Framework.

Funding Supporting Students Enrolled in a Statewide Dropout Reengagement Program. Subject to appropriations, OSPI must allocate funding to ESDs, school districts, and public schools to eliminate barriers to high school completion for students who are:

- 16 to 21 and are severely deficient in academic credits;
- unable to graduate high school with their peer group; and
- enrolled in a statewide dropout reengagement program.

Given that these students have varied needs, the use of these funds are flexible and can be used for supports such as testing fees, school supplies, clothing, food and nutrition, and transportation.

OSPI must allocate funding on a per-student basis, and the allocation of funding for either small or rural school districts must be differentiated and include a base amount of funding.

OSPI may adopt rules to implement the grant program and funding provisions. These provisions expire December 31, 2026.

Appropriation: The bill contains a section or sections to limit implementation to the availability of amounts appropriated for that specific purpose.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: This state and country has a chronic absenteeism problem, which means students miss school for any reason whether excused or unexcused. Students need to get back into the classroom to address learning loss from the pandemic. Schools need to engage and partner with community organizations to help remove barriers preventing students from getting to school. By working with community organizations, local needs can be better met. This bill would provide wrap-around support to help address barriers and basic needs. This concept has been piloted, and it has been successful. Students can become youth leaders in these programs. Mentors can help improve student's attendance and graduation rate, and they can be especially important in rural communities. Community colleges should be added to the bill to allow them to receive grant funds and barrier reduction funds. This bill makes and continues critical investments to help solve this issue.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator John Braun, Prime Sponsor; Beatrice Kiraguri, Testifying on behalf of African Young Dreamers Empowerment Program Intl; Jeff Engle, Big Brothers Big Sisters; Evelyn Aguilar-Clavel, Lopez Island Family Resource Center; Krissy Johnson, OSPI; Kevin Chase, ESD 105; Shaelin Henry; Colleen Lang, United Way King County; Paula Sardinas, WBBA/UWKC; Troy Goracke, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Pete Peterson, Kiona-Benton City School District.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education):
No one.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: This bill provides for a local support structure. There was a decision package that requested funding for this work. Barrier reduction funding has been a successful approach. The state's existing support will go further if you add barrier reduction services. The impacts of a pandemic and homelessness have made this bill important. This primarily serves homeless children,

children in foster care, children of color, and rural children.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator John Braun, Prime Sponsor; Troy Goracke, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Joy Sebe, United Way of King County; Anna Hernandez-French, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; CYNTHIA DAMPIER, NS Services LLC; Lauren Mendez, Washington School Counselor Association; Paula Sardinas, WBBA/FMSGs.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Ways & Means): No one.