

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5007

As of February 20, 2025

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, Cortes, Dhingra, Dozier, Harris, King, Nobles, Riccelli, Trudeau, Wagoner, Warnick, Wilson, C. and Wilson, J..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/28/25, 2/18/25 [DP-WM, w/oRec].

Ways & Means: 2/24/25.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires each educational service district (ESD) to develop and maintain the capacity to offer training and coaching for staff to address excessive absenteeism and truancy, subject to appropriations.
- Adds supporting students who are chronically absent to the Building Bridges Program through grants to community-based organizations, tribes, and community and technical colleges.
- Adds examples of the services and resources available through the statewide dropout reengagement system known as Open Doors Youth Reengagement.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

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

Signed by Senators Wellman, Chair; Nobles, Vice Chair, K-12; Wilson, C., Vice

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.

Chair, Early Learning; Harris, Ranking Member; Cortes, Dozier, Hansen and Krishnadasan.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator McCune.

Staff: Ailey Kato (786-7434)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Kayla Hammer (786-7305)

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.

Building Bridges Program. Subject to appropriations, OSPI must provide grants to local partnerships of schools, families, and communities for a statewide comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system. A Building Bridges Program means a local partnership of schools, families, and communities that provides:

- a system that identifies individual students at risk of dropping out based on local data;
- coaches or mentors for students as necessary;
- staff responsible for coordination of community partners that provides a continuum of academic and nonacademic supports;
- retrieval or reentry activities; and
- alternative educational programming.

Statewide Dropout Reengagement Program. State law provides a framework for a statewide dropout reengagement system known as Open Doors Youth Reengagement. 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 years old;
- 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 interlocal agreements 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 work in collaboration with OSPI to 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.

Building Bridges Program. This program is updated to add supporting students who are chronically absent. When community-based organizations, tribes, and community and technical colleges are awarded grants to support those who are chronically absent, grant funds may also be used for the following strategies and supports:

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

OSPI may require grant funding recipients to report the impacts of their efforts in alignment with the measure of the Washington School Improvement Framework.

References to reports that have already been submitted are removed, and language is updated to align with current state law.

Statewide Dropout Reengagement Program. Examples of case management, academic and career counseling, and assistance with accessing the following services and resources are added:

- academic related supports, such as covering test fees, calculators, and laboratory and other school supplies;
- nonacademic supports, such as adequate and appropriate clothing, adequate and reliable access to food and nutrition; and transportation, including bus passes, gas vouchers, and subsidized parking; and
- connecting students to behavioral and physical health supports.

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: The number of chronically absent students is high in this state, and it got worse during the pandemic. Absences can quickly derail students' progress, and students can feel disconnected from school. This bill provides some basic tools for schools and families to help get kids back on track with their attendance. Students cannot do well in school if they are not there. Chronic absenteeism is an early warning indicator. If this can be addressed early, it can help increase the chance of students graduating on time. Students face a variety of barriers, many of them systemic, when it comes to attending school on a regular basis, and this bill will help remove these barriers and is solutions-based and proactive. This bill will help meet students' fundamental needs such as clothing and transportation, so they can attend school. This bill promotes partnerships between schools and the community, and ESDs are ready to do this work. When elementary students develop good habits with attendance, they carry those habits into the secondary grades. This bill will help create a more inclusive educational system and help make sure students have the supports they need.

CON: The threshold for chronic absenteeism, which is 18 days during a school year, could easily be met with some sickness and vacation. This bill would allow home visits to these families, which schools should not have the authority to do.

Persons Testifying (Early Learning & K-12 Education): PRO: Senator John Braun, Prime Sponsor; Pete Peterson, Kiona-Benton City SD; Erica Limon-Trefielo, Communities in Schools of Washington; Shane Backland, Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD); Dixie Grunfelder, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction; Mason Bryant; Keith-Ann Campbell, Big Brothers Big Sisters; Will Durden, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Isabella Flores, State Board for Community and

Technical Colleges (SBCTC).

CON: Julie Barrett, Conservative Ladies of Washington.

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