

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4220

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to allow local educational agencies to use Federal funds for programs and activities that address chronic absenteeism.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 30, 2019

Mr. RYAN (for himself and Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to allow local educational agencies to use Federal funds for programs and activities that address chronic absenteeism.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Chronic Absenteeism
5 Reduction in Every School (CARES) Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Students who are chronically absent—
2 meaning they miss 10 percent or more of the school
3 year—are more likely to fall behind academically,
4 which can lead to hardships later in life. These stu-
5 dents are 68 percent less likely than their peers to
6 graduate. This leaves them prone to living in pov-
7 erty, suffering from diminished health, and being in-
8 volved in the criminal justice system later in life.

9 (2) The Department of Education’s Office of
10 Civil Rights Data Collection found that over
11 7,000,000 students were chronically absent during
12 the 2015–2016 school year. This makes up 14 per-
13 cent of all students.

14 (3) Students of color are disproportionately
15 chronically absent compared to their White peers.
16 Latino students are 17 percent more likely to be
17 chronically absent, African-American students are
18 40 percent more likely, and American Indian and
19 Pacific Islander students are over 50 percent more
20 likely, according to the Department of Education’s
21 Office of Civil Rights Data Collection.

22 (4) The Department of Education has found
23 that chronic absenteeism is widespread, stemming
24 from a wide range of often overlapping internal and
25 external factors. External factors include homeless-

1 ness, challenges within families, and transportation;
2 while internal factors include health, fear of bullying,
3 concern for safety, and not valuing daily school at-
4 tendance. Therefore, it is critical to have cross-sector
5 collaborations and multifaceted strategies that incor-
6 porate parents (or guardians, as appropriate), pub-
7 lic-partner partnerships, and community partners.

8 (5) Studies have shown that mentors can help
9 reduce chronic absenteeism. Students who regularly
10 meet with mentors are 52 percent less likely than
11 their peers to skip a day of school and 37 percent
12 less likely to skip a class. In one program, previously
13 chronically absent students in 2012–2013 with
14 “Success Mentors” gained 51,562 additional days of
15 school compared to previously chronically absent stu-
16 dents without mentors at comparison schools; and
17 92,277 additional days compared to comparison
18 school students without mentors during the 3-year
19 initiative. A report on the impact of one mentoring
20 program found that it reduced school absenteeism by
21 half. In another study, youth showed a gain of more
22 than a week of class attendance.

1 **SEC. 3. INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS CHRONIC ABSENTEE-**
2 **ISM.**

3 Section 4108(5) of the Elementary and Secondary
4 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7118(5)) is amended—

5 (1) in subparagraph (H)(iii) by striking “or” at
6 the end;

7 (2) in subparagraph (I), by striking the period
8 at the end and inserting “; or”; and

9 (3) by adding at the end the following:

10 “(J) interventions for students who miss
11 10 percent or more of school days (as deter-
12 mined at any time during a school year), which
13 may include—

14 “(i) implementing data collection sys-
15 tems that assist schools in collecting and
16 tracking attendance data;

17 “(ii) creating data-sharing and con-
18 fidentiality agreements between schools, so-
19 cial service agencies, city and county gov-
20 ernments, and partner agencies or commu-
21 nity organizations working with students;

22 “(iii) partnering with local health,
23 transportation, and service providers to
24 target intervention efforts;

25 “(iv) training and integrating school
26 personnel for mentoring;

1 “(v) carrying out mentoring programs
2 that—

3 “(I) are structured, managed,
4 and appropriately match students
5 with screened and well-trained adult
6 volunteers for group and one-on-one
7 mentoring relationships;

8 “(II) encourage mentors and stu-
9 dents to meet frequently;

10 “(III) emphasize the importance
11 of regular school attendance; and

12 “(IV) provide and facilitate the
13 necessary student support services;

14 “(vi) partnering with community orga-
15 nizations that offer mentoring services that
16 consist of—

17 “(I) screening and training of
18 adult volunteers;

19 “(II) matching students with the
20 appropriate adult volunteer mentors;

21 “(III) support and oversight of
22 the mentoring relationship;

23 “(IV) establishing goals and eval-
24 uation of outcomes for mentored stu-
25 dents; and

1 “(V) planned and ongoing coordi-
2 nation between mentors and school
3 personnel to identify individual stu-
4 dent challenges causing chronic absen-
5 teeism in an effort to connect mentees
6 to appropriate intervention efforts;

7 “(vii) cross-age peer mentoring pro-
8 grams under which an older student serves
9 a mentor for a younger student for the
10 purpose of guiding and supporting the stu-
11 dent’s academic, social, and emotional de-
12 velopment;

13 “(viii) identifying issues that lead to
14 school absences;

15 “(ix) meeting with students and par-
16 ents (or guardians, as appropriate) to en-
17 gage students and improve performance;

18 “(x) arranging for teacher home visits
19 to develop relationships among students,
20 parents (or guardians, as appropriate) and
21 schools;

22 “(xi) connecting students to existing
23 school resources and activities, including
24 school counseling services and existing
25 community-based organizations;

1 “(xii) using mentors to serve as a
2 bridge between students, parents (or
3 guardians, as appropriate), and schools;

4 “(xiii) implementing evidence-based
5 restorative justice strategies aimed at re-
6 ducing suspensions in order to keep stu-
7 dents in school; or

8 “(xiv) providing personnel training to
9 build positive school climates and promote
10 social-emotional learning.”.

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