

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1864

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

APRIL 3, 2017

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

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 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 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 experience hardships later
4 in life and 68 percent less likely than their peers to
5 graduate.

6 (2) The Department of Education’s Office of
7 Civil Rights Data Collection found that over 6.8 mil-
8 lion students were chronically absent during the
9 2013–2014 school year. This makes up 14 percent
10 of all students.

11 (3) Chronically absent students are more likely
12 to become high school drop outs. This leaves them
13 prone to living in poverty, suffering from diminished
14 health, and being involved in the criminal justice
15 system later in life. Nineteen percent of high school
16 students are chronically absent.

17 (4) The Department of Education has found
18 that, “Chronic absenteeism is widespread” and “Re-
19 search suggests the reasons for chronic absenteeism
20 are as varied as the challenges our students and
21 families face—including poor health, limited trans-
22 portation, and a lack of safety—which can be par-
23 ticularly acute in disadvantaged communities and
24 areas of poverty.”.

1 (5) A report by the Everyone Graduates Center
2 found that chronic absenteeism can stem from a
3 wide range of often overlapping internal and exter-
4 nal factors. External factors include homelessness,
5 family dysfunction, and transportation; while inter-
6 nal factors include health, fear of bullying, concern
7 for safety, and not valuing daily school attendance.
8 Therefore, it is critical to have cross-sector collabo-
9 rations and multifaceted strategies that incorporate
10 parents, public-private partnerships, and community
11 partners.

12 (6) Students of color are disproportionately
13 chronically absent compared to their White peers.
14 Latino students are 11 percent more likely to be
15 chronically absent, African-American students are
16 36 percent more likely, and American Indian and
17 Pacific Islander students are over 65 percent more
18 likely according to the Department of Education’s
19 Office of Civil Rights Data Collection.

20 (7) Studies have shown that mentors can help
21 reduce chronic absenteeism. Students who regularly
22 meet with mentors are 52 percent less likely than
23 their peers to skip a day of school and 37 percent
24 less likely to skip a class. In one program, previously
25 chronically absent students in 2012–13 with “Suc-

cess Mentors” gained 51,562 additional days of school compared to previously chronically absent students without mentors at comparison schools; and 92,277 additional days compared to comparison school students without mentors during the 3-year initiative.

(8) A report on the impact of one mentoring program found that it reduced school absenteeism by half. In another study, youth showed a gain of more than a week of class attendance.

(9) Studies estimate that 9.4 million young people who are at risk need a mentor.

SEC. 3. INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM.

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

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

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

(3) by adding at the end the following:

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

1 “(i) implementing data collection sys-
2 tems that assist schools in collecting and
3 tracking attendance data;

4 “(ii) creating data-sharing and con-
5 fidentiality agreements between schools
6 and partner agencies or community organi-
7 zations working with students;

8 “(iii) partnering with local health,
9 transportation, and service providers;

10 “(iv) integrating school personnel for
11 mentoring;

12 “(v) carrying out mentoring programs
13 that—

14 “(I) are structured, managed,
15 and appropriately match students
16 with screened and well-trained adult
17 volunteers for group and one-on-one
18 mentoring relationships;

19 “(II) encourage mentors and stu-
20 dents to meet frequently;

21 “(III) are intended to satisfy a
22 student’s need for involvement with a
23 caring and supportive adult who
24 serves as a positive role model;

1 “(IV) emphasize the importance
2 of regular school attendance; and

3 “(V) provide and facilitate the
4 necessary student support services;

5 “(vi) partnering with community orga-
6 nizations that offer mentoring services that
7 consist of—

8 “(I) screening and training of
9 adult volunteers;

10 “(II) matching children and
11 youth with the appropriate adult vol-
12 unteer mentors;

13 “(III) support and oversight of
14 the mentoring relationship;

15 “(IV) establishing goals and eval-
16 uation of outcomes for mentored chil-
17 dren; and

18 “(V) planned and ongoing coordi-
19 nation between mentors and school
20 personnel to identify individual stu-
21 dent challenges causing chronic absen-
22 teeism in an effort to connect mentees
23 to appropriate school personnel or re-
24 sources such as access to transpor-
25 tation or medical care;

1 “(vii) cross-age peer mentoring pro-
2 grams under which an older youth serves a
3 mentor for a younger student for the pur-
4 pose of guiding and supporting the stu-
5 dent’s academic, social, and emotional de-
6 velopment;

7 “(viii) school reorganization aimed at
8 improving relationships between students
9 and staff, including strategies for recog-
10 nizing and modeling good attendance, such
11 as mentors greeting students each day and
12 promptly contacting a parent or mentor if
13 the student is absent;

14 “(ix) identifying issues that lead to
15 school absences;

16 “(x) meeting with students and par-
17 ents to engage students and improve per-
18 formance;

19 “(xi) arranging for teacher home vis-
20 its to develop relationships among stu-
21 dents, parents and schools;

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

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

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

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

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