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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

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A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

Introduced By: Senators Cano, Gallo, DiMario, Lauria, and Quezada

Date Introduced: March 01, 2024

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 16-19 of the General Laws entitled "Compulsory Attendance [See
2 Title 16 Chapter 97 — The Rhode Island Board of Education Act]" is hereby amended by adding
3 thereto the following sections:

4 **16-19-11. Program to monitor absenteeism - Attendance support teams.**

5 (a) As used in this section and in § 16-19-12:

6 (1) "Absence" means an excused absence, unexcused absence or disciplinary absence, or
7 an in-school suspension that is greater than or equal to one-half (1/2) of a school day;

8 (2) "Chronically absent child" means a child who is enrolled in a school under the
9 jurisdiction of a municipal or regional school board or committee and whose total number of
10 absences at any time during a school year is equal to or greater than ten percent (10%) of the total
11 number of days that the student has been enrolled at the school during that school year;

12 (3) "District chronic absenteeism rate" means the total number of chronically absent
13 children under the jurisdiction of a local or regional board of education in the previous school year
14 divided by the total number of children under the jurisdiction of the board for that school year;

15 (4) "LEA" or "local education agency" means the public board or authority legally
16 constituted within this state for administrative control and direction of, or to perform a service
17 function for, public elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and any other secondary
18 schools, in a municipality, or a combination of school districts in the state, or for a charter public
19 school or mayoral academy, or any network of charter schools or mayoral academies.

1 (5) "School chronic absenteeism rate" means the total number of chronically absent
2 children for a school in the previous school year divided by the total number of children enrolled
3 in the school for that school year.

4 (b) Each local education agency shall adopt a program to monitor absenteeism data to
5 identify students in their schools who are at risk for chronic absenteeism before it becomes a chronic
6 situation. In adopting this program, the LEA may adopt strategies and techniques which will be
7 tailored to meet the particular needs of their student population. In general, the program should
8 include the following elements:

9 (1) Implementation of a system of interventions and supports that work for the specific
10 school community;

11 (2) Schools with district and school chronic absenteeism rates shall develop a corrective
12 action plan of strategies specific to their student population and community to decrease chronic
13 absenteeism, which may include attendance support teams as set forth in subsection (c) of this
14 section;

15 (3) The development of customized attendance plans that have specific goals that are
16 measurable, achievable, relevant, inclusive, and equitable;

17 (4) Positive behavior interventions and supports from school-based attendance teams;

18 (5) Developing attendance goals by establishing a strong school and district culture, in
19 combination with the systematic use of data that supports all students and improved engagement
20 and attendance;

21 (6) Using attendance data to identify students in schools who are at high risk for dropping
22 out or withdrawing. While each LEA should adjust its program to meet the needs of its student
23 population, warning signs such as academic indicators, class rank, behavior, and attendance rates
24 should be considered;

25 (7) Developing a district benchmark such as a pre-determined number of unexcused
26 absences for early intervention, to identify students who have a record of chronic absenteeism; and

27 (8) While not required, LEAs should consider the use and incorporation of peer-to-peer
28 support teams to address chronic absenteeism within individual school buildings.

29 (c)(1) Each municipal or regional school board or committee that:

30 (i) Has a district chronic absenteeism rate of ten percent (10%) or higher shall establish an
31 attendance support team for the school district;

32 (ii) Has a school under the jurisdiction of the board or committee with a school chronic
33 absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher shall establish an attendance support team at
34 such school;

1 (iii) Has more than one school under the jurisdiction of the board or committee with a
2 school chronic absenteeism rate of fifteen percent (15%) or higher shall establish an attendance
3 support team for the school district or at each such school; or

4 (iv) Has a district chronic absenteeism rate of ten percent (10%) or higher and one or more
5 schools under the jurisdiction of the board or committee with a school chronic absenteeism rate of
6 fifteen percent (15%) or higher shall establish an attendance support team for the school district or
7 at each such school. Attendance support teams shall be established to address chronic absenteeism
8 in the school district or at the school or schools.

9 (2) Any attendance support team established under this section may consist of school
10 administrators, guidance counselors, school social workers, teachers and/or representatives from
11 community-based programs who address issues related to student attendance by providing
12 programs and services to truants, and chronically absent children and their parents or guardians.
13 Each attendance support team shall be responsible for reviewing the cases of truants and chronically
14 absent children, discussing school interventions and community referrals for truants and
15 chronically absent children and making any additional recommendations for such truants and
16 chronically absent children, and their parents or guardians. Each attendance support team shall meet
17 at least monthly.

18 **16-19-12. Chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan.**

19 (a) Not later than January 1, 2025, the Rhode Island council of elementary and secondary
20 education shall develop a chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan for use by LEAs,
21 municipal and regional school boards, and committees of education, to implement the provisions
22 of §16-19-1, with the overarching goal of reducing chronic absenteeism within schools and school
23 districts.

24 (b)(1) The chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan shall include, but need
25 not be limited to, the following information that describes:

26 (i) Chronic absenteeism, including, but not limited to, the definition of a chronically absent
27 child under § 16-19-11, and the causes of chronic absenteeism, such as poverty, violence, poor
28 health and lack of access to transportation;

29 (ii) The effect of chronic absenteeism on a student's academic performance;

30 (iii) How family and school partnerships with community resources, including, but not
31 limited to, family resource centers and youth service bureaus, and peer-to-peer student support
32 attendance teams, can reduce chronic absenteeism and improve student attendance;

33 (iv) A means of collecting and analyzing data relating to student attendance, truancy and
34 chronic absenteeism for the purpose of:

1 (A) Disaggregating such data by school district, school, grade and subgroups, such as race,
2 ethnicity, gender, eligibility for free or reduced priced lunches and students whose primary
3 language is not English; and

4 (B) Assisting local and regional boards of education in:

5 (I) Tracking chronic absenteeism over multiple years and for the current school year;

6 (II) Developing indicators to identify students who are at risk of being chronically absent
7 children;

8 (III) Monitoring students' attendance over time; and

9 (IV) Making adjustments to interventions as they are being implemented.

10 (2) The chronic absenteeism prevention and intervention plan may include, but need not
11 be limited to:

12 (i) A research-based and data-driven mentorship model that addresses and attempts to
13 reduce chronic absenteeism through the use of mentors, such as students, teachers, administrators,
14 intramural and interscholastic athletic coaches, school resource officers and community partners;
15 and

16 (ii) Incentives and rewards that recognize schools and students that improve attendance
17 and reduce the school chronic absenteeism rate.

18 (c) The council on elementary and secondary education shall include the applicable
19 district's chronic absenteeism rate of each school district within the report on school discipline
20 presented annually to the general assembly pursuant to the provisions of § 16-60-4. The council
21 shall also incorporate and include the applicable school or district's chronic absenteeism rate in any
22 report card or evaluation of the effectiveness of a school or district.

23 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE

1 This act would direct each local education agency to adopt a program to monitor
2 absenteeism data to identify students in their schools who are at risk for chronic absenteeism before
3 it becomes a chronic situation. This act would also direct school districts experiencing high rates
4 of student absenteeism to establish attendance support teams to address this absenteeism. The act
5 would also direct the council on elementary and secondary education to establish a chronic
6 absenteeism prevention and intervention plan by January 1, 2025. The act would also direct the
7 council on elementary and secondary education to include each school district's absenteeism rate
8 within the report on school discipline presented annually to the general assembly, and to include
9 the school or district's absenteeism rate in any report card or evaluation of the effectiveness of a
10 school or district.

11 This act would take effect upon passage.

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