

2024 -- H 7289

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LC003451
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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: Representatives McNamara, Donovan, Cruz, Ackerman, Giraldo, Voas,
Potter, and Noret

Date Introduced: January 26, 2024

Referred To: House Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 16-19 of the General Laws entitled "Compulsory Attendance" is
2 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **16-19-11. Pilot program to promote increases in student attendance.**

4 (a) The department of elementary and secondary education (the "department") shall
5 oversee a two (2) year pilot program to provide outreach and tracking services at two (2) public
6 high schools. The purpose of the pilot program shall be to see whether outreach and tracking
7 programs utilizing third-party providers would be effective in promoting increased school
8 attendance and reducing absenteeism among students, especially among student populations which
9 have been identified by the department as having high rates of chronic absenteeism. On or before
10 July 1, 2024, the department shall identify two (2) public high schools in the state, one from an
11 urban or urban core district and one from a suburban or rural district, which schools experience a
12 high rate of student absenteeism, within which to initiate an outreach and tracking program. The
13 department shall retain the services of an outside provider or vendor to implement the outreach and
14 tracking services program.

15 (b)(1) The outreach and tracking program (the "program") shall be an intensive community
16 support program combining outreach, care coordination, advocacy, academic support, and crisis
17 response within the two (2) selected high schools. Frequent contact with youth and families shall
18 be maintained to provide necessary assistance and skill development, while at the same time
19 encouraging individual and family responsibility and empowerment. The intensity of services

1 provided shall be based on a comprehensive assessment of risk and resiliency factors conducted
2 over the first thirty (30) days of services and shall then be modified as needed based on ongoing
3 changes in risk and resiliency factors. Youth who score at the highest level of need will receive a
4 minimum of five (5) scheduled in-person contacts per week that can include home visits, assistance
5 with transportation, including to school, crisis intervention, skill building, group therapy, and/or
6 therapeutic recreation. Services shall be available in person Monday through Saturday, with on-
7 call availability as needed on Sundays.

8 (2) The program shall utilize educational success workers who engage caregivers, youth,
9 and school staff to create a home-school link allowing for meaningful conversations around
10 academic attendance and performance. The program shall include transportation to school as
11 needed while also identifying opportunities for independence and skill development to prevent a
12 reliance on the service for transportation, and to create sustainable change.

13 (3) Services shall be provided by the program within the two (2) high schools during the
14 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 academic years.

15 (4) The department shall submit a report on the program to the governor, the speaker of
16 house, and the president of the senate, on or before December 1, 2026. This report shall provide an
17 overview of the actions taken during the program and the results of the program. The report shall
18 include a comparison of attendance and absenteeism rates for the two (2) years immediately prior
19 to initiation of the program with and to the same rates during the program. The report may also
20 contain recommendations from the department for proposed next steps or further actions to reduce
21 student absenteeism.

22 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 the department of elementary and secondary education to establish a
2 two (2) year pilot outreach and tracking program at two (2) public high schools to address issues
3 of attendance and chronic absenteeism among students.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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