

SENATE BILL 715

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By: **Senators Ferguson, Klausmeier, Montgomery, Rosapepe, and Stone**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2014

Assigned to: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

A BILL ENTITLED

AN ACT concerning

Task Force to Study Chronic Absenteeism in Maryland's Public Schools

FOR the purpose of establishing the Task Force to Study Chronic Absenteeism in Maryland's Public Schools; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the Task Force; prohibiting a member of the Task Force from receiving certain compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement of certain expenses; requiring the Task Force to collect and analyze certain data, evaluate certain strategies and best practices, identify certain responses, and make certain recommendations; requiring the Task Force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before a certain date; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Task Force to Study Chronic Absenteeism in Maryland's Public Schools.

Preamble

WHEREAS, Over 85,000 1st through 12th grade students in Maryland missed 4 weeks or more of class in the 2012–2013 school year; and

WHEREAS, Seventeen percent of 1st through 12th grade students who are eligible for free or reduced price meals missed 4 weeks or more of class compared to 6.6 percent of students who are not eligible for free or reduced price meals; and

WHEREAS, Nineteen percent of 1st through 12th grade students with a disability or impairment missed 4 weeks or more of class compared to 10 percent of students without a disability; and

WHEREAS, Chronic absenteeism, which is defined as missing 4 weeks or more of class for the purposes of this Act, is correlated with students not reading on grade level, failing to matriculate with their peers, and failing to graduate from high school; now, therefore,

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That:

(a) There is a Task Force to Study Chronic Absenteeism in Maryland's Public Schools.

(b) The Task Force consists of the following members:

(1) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of the Senate;

(2) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(3) the State Superintendent of Schools, or the State Superintendent's designee;

(4) the President of the State Board of Education, or the President's designee;

(5) the Chair of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, or the Chair's designee;

(6) the Secretary of Human Resources, or the Secretary's designee;

(7) the Executive Director of the Governor's Office for Children, or the Executive Director's designee;

(8) the President of the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland, or the President's designee;

(9) the Executive Director of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, or the Executive Director's designee;

(10) the President of the Baltimore Teachers Union, or the President's designee;

(11) the President of the Maryland State Education Association, or the President's designee;

(12) the President of the Maryland Association of Student Councils, or the President's designee; and

(13) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

(i) one representative from an organization in the State that handles issues relating to children with disabilities, impairments, social or emotional issues, or homelessness;

(ii) one representative from an organization in the State that promotes extended learning opportunities for youth; and

(iii) three representatives from community-based organizations that represent the interests of school-age children, child welfare advocates, education personnel, faith-based communities, criminal justice advocates, parents and guardians of school-age children, or students.

(c) The Task Force shall select a chair from among its members at the first meeting of the Task Force.

(d) The State Department of Education shall provide staff for the Task Force.

(e) A member of the Task Force:

(1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Task Force; but

(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

(f) The Task Force shall:

(1) collect and analyze data relating to chronic absenteeism, including:

(i) where and in what grades chronic absenteeism is most prevalent;

(ii) the prevalence and effect of chronic absenteeism in prekindergarten and kindergarten; and

(iii) the relationship between chronic absenteeism in secondary grades and course completion and graduation;

(2) evaluate local and national strategies and best practices to address chronic absenteeism;

(3) identify differentiated and comprehensive responses for chronic absenteeism that rely first on prevention and intervention; and

(4) make recommendations that:

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(i) recognize the role of the community, public agencies, public school systems, public schools, parents, and students in solving the problem of chronic absenteeism; and

(ii) include ways in which:

1. data collection and reporting of chronic absenteeism can be improved; and

2. chronic absenteeism can be prevented and eliminated.

(g) On or before December 1, 2014, the Task Force shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2014. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and, at the end of June 30, 2015, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.