

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2011 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 191
Ways and Means

(Delegate Gutierrez, *et al.*)

Public Schools - Student Attendance - Preventing Chronic Absenteeism

This bill requires that each school maintain a record of the daily attendance of each student enrolled in the school using the unique student identifier number assigned by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). A school is also required to calculate and maintain a record of the number of students who are either chronically absent or have high attendance, disaggregated by specified subgroups, and to submit a report on this information to the local board of education for each grading period.

Each local board must calculate and maintain a record of the number of students who are either chronically absent or have high attendance based on the reports disaggregated by specified subgroups. A local board must report this information to the State Board of Education at least once a year. In addition, each local board must develop and implement an attendance incentive action plan.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2011.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The State Board of Education can collect reports from local school systems and provide technical assistance to local school systems using existing resources.

Local Effect: Local school system expenditures increase minimally to create the required reports and incentive action plans. Any fiscal impact due to changes to local school systems' attendance monitoring policies are anticipated to be minimal.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The purpose of the attendance incentive action plan that each local board of education must develop is to encourage students with chronic absenteeism to attend school regularly and to inform students with chronic absenteeism, and the parents or guardian of those students, of the legal attendance requirements and long-term consequences of chronic school absenteeism, as well as the academic and social benefits of regular school attendance.

The attendance incentive action plan must include:

- chronic absenteeism prevention strategies;
- early intervention strategies;
- positive attendance campaigns;
- parental outreach; and
- student attendance incentives.

Attendance records must be disaggregated by grade level, race and ethnicity, limited-English proficiency status, special education status, and any other federal or State defined subgroup.

Current Law: A child age 5 to 15 must attend public school regularly unless the child is otherwise receiving regular, thorough instruction at an alternative setting (*i.e.*, a private or home school). An individual who has legal custody of a child age 5 to 15 and fails to see that the child attends school is guilty of a misdemeanor.

Regulations specify that a record of the daily attendance of each student must be kept in accordance with the Maryland Student Records System Manual (2007). Local school systems are required to develop a student attendance policy that includes penalties for not meeting attendance standards and actions that will be taken by school system staff when a student is unlawfully absent. The attendance monitoring procedure must include intervention strategies and procedures for dealing with absenteeism at the beginning stages of the problem as well as chronic absenteeism. Students that are chronically absent must be referred to pupil services or other central office professionals for case management.

Background: School attendance rates are lower for high school students than for elementary or middle school students. **Exhibit 1** displays the average daily attendance rate for high schools and the percentage of high school students who were absent from school more than 20 days during the school year for each of the 24 local school systems in the 2009-2010 school year. The exhibit shows that the five jurisdictions with the

lowest average daily attendance rate (Baltimore City, and Baltimore, Cecil, Kent, and Prince George's counties) also have the highest percentage of students who are chronically absent.

Exhibit 1
High School Average Daily Attendance Rate and Percentage of
High School Students Absent from School More than 20 Days by School System
2009-2010 School Year

<u>School System</u>	<u>Average Daily Attendance Rate</u>	<u>School System</u>	<u>Percent of Students Absent More than 20 Days</u>
Baltimore City	82.6%	Baltimore City	41.9%
Kent	89.9%	Kent	31.6%
Prince George's	90.0%	Prince George's	27.2%
Cecil	90.8%	Cecil	26.4%
Baltimore	92.1%	Baltimore	20.1%
Caroline	92.1%	Dorchester	19.9%
Dorchester	92.2%	Somerset	17.8%
Somerset	92.3%	Caroline	17.7%
Allegany	92.6%	Allegany	17.5%
St. Mary's	92.9%	St. Mary's	17.0%
Harford	93.1%	Harford	16.5%
Wicomico	93.1%	Charles	16.1%
Frederick	93.4%	Wicomico	14.5%
Worcester	93.4%	Worcester	14.2%
Anne Arundel	93.5%	Anne Arundel	14.0%
Charles	93.5%	Frederick	13.7%
Queen Anne's	93.7%	Queen Anne's	13.3%
Talbot	93.7%	Talbot	12.9%
Calvert	94.1%	Washington	10.7%
Washington	94.4%	Carroll	9.7%
Carroll	94.9%	Montgomery	8.3%
Garrett	94.9%	Howard	7.9%
Howard	95.0%	Calvert	7.6%
Montgomery	95.3%	Garrett	6.5%
All High Schools	92.1%	All High Schools	18.1%

Source: Maryland State Department of Education

Poor attendance is one of the key warning signs that a student is going to drop out of high school. One study of Chicago public schools found that missing 20% of the school days in ninth grade is a better predictor of whether a student is going to drop out than eighth grade test scores.

Local Expenditures: Local school system expenditures increase minimally to produce the required attendance reports. Baltimore City reports that the attendance reports can be produced without any changes to its database system; it is assumed that the other local jurisdictions can produce the reports without any major changes. MSDE reports that, if necessary, its Pupil Services and Alternative Programs Branch can provide technical assistance to local school systems with existing resources. However, two local school systems reported that additional personal hours may be required to produce the reports for publication.

One school system reported that it will cost approximately \$25,000 per year to expand its attendance incentive program. However, the Department of Legislative Services believes that the actual cost to implement an attendance incentive action plan that meets the requirements of the bill will be minimal.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1486 of 2010 received a hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee, but no further action was taken.

Cross File: SB 474 (Senator Madaleno, *et al.*) – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Baltimore City; Montgomery, Prince George's, Washington, and Worcester counties; Department of Legislative Services

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