HOUSE BILL 869

By: **Delegates Cullison, Gutierrez, Haynes, Howard, Ivey, Luedtke, A. Miller, Olszewski, Stukes, and M. Washington**
Introduced and read first time: February 5, 2014
Assigned to: Ways and Means

A BILL ENTITLED

1   AN ACT concerning

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

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

13   Preamble

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

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

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

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

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.
        [Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13   (e)   A member of the Task Force:

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

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

17   (f)   The Task Force shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

29   (4)   make recommendations that:

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

4   (ii)   include ways in which:

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

7   2.   chronic absenteeism can be prevented and eliminated.

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

11   SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
12   July 1, 2014. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and, at the end of June 30,
13   2015, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be
14   abrogated and of no further force and effect.