

HOUSE BILL 879

F1

(5lr3451)

ENROLLED BILL

— *Ways and Means/Education, Energy, and the Environment* —

Introduced by **Delegates Smith, Addison, Boyce, Charkoudian, Conaway, Embry, J. Lewis, R. Lewis, Martinez, McCaskill, Mireku-North, Phillips, Ruff, Shetty, Solomon, Wells, Wilkins, Williams, ~~and Young~~ Young, and Taveras**

Read and Examined by Proofreaders:

Proofreader.

Proofreader.

Sealed with the Great Seal and presented to the Governor, for his approval this _____ day of _____ at _____ o'clock, _____ M.

Speaker.

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force to Improve Attendance and Reduce Chronic Absenteeism in Schools**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Task Force to Improve Attendance and Reduce Chronic
4 Absenteeism in Schools for the purpose of studying and making recommendations
5 on practices to identify, prevent, and eliminate chronic absenteeism by students from
6 schools in the State; and generally relating to the Task Force to Improve Attendance
7 and Reduce Chronic Absenteeism in Schools.

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

10 (a) There is a Task Force to Improve Attendance and Reduce Chronic
11 Absenteeism in Schools.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.

Italics indicate opposite chamber/conference committee amendments.



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

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

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

6 (3) the following members, appointed by the State Superintendent of
7 Schools:

8 (i) one county superintendent of schools;

9 (ii) one representative of the Governor's Office;

10 (iii) one school-based administrator;

11 (iv) one public school teacher;

12 (v) one school counselor;

13 (vi) one parent of a student enrolled in a public school;

14 (vii) one pupil personnel worker;

15 (viii) one public school student;

16 ~~(viii)~~ (ix) one representative of a teacher's union;

17 ~~(ix)~~ (x) one representative of an institution of higher education;

18 ~~(x)~~ (xi) one representative of a nationally recognized educational
19 organization with expertise in student attendance or chronic absenteeism;

20 (xii) one school-based licensed clinical social worker, registered
21 nurse, or other school-based public health professional; and

22 ~~(xi)~~ (xiii) any other individuals with expertise the State
23 Superintendent determines is relevant to the work of the Task Force.

24 (c) The Task Force shall elect a chair and vice chair from among its members.

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

26 (e) A member of the Task Force:

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

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

4 (f) The Task Force shall:

5 (1) ~~collect and~~ analyze data regarding chronic absenteeism by students
6 from schools in the State, including research, student attendance collection practices, and
7 trends in statewide and local student attendance;

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

10 (3) identify differentiated and comprehensive responses for chronic
11 absenteeism that prioritize prevention and intervention;

12 (4) set a statewide goal for the reduction in chronic absenteeism
13 throughout the State;

14 (5) develop and distribute guidance on identifying and preventing chronic
15 absenteeism to local school systems;

16 (6) develop and distribute a toolkit on identifying and preventing chronic
17 absenteeism for school leaders in each grade band (elementary, middle, and high school)
18 that includes culturally responsive and nonpunitive strategies for reducing student
19 absences; ~~and~~

20 (7) establish categories that identify reasons for chronic absenteeism by
21 students from schools in the State, and collect data for each corresponding category for each
22 local school system; and

23 (8) make recommendations on:

24 (i) a single definition of chronic absenteeism;

25 (ii) the role that the community, public agencies, public school
26 systems and schools, parents, and students have in solving the problem of chronic
27 absenteeism;

28 (iii) the best practices for data collection relating to student chronic
29 absenteeism and tracking student attendance; and

30 (iv) the most effective practices to prevent and eliminate chronic
31 absenteeism that are culturally responsive and nonpunitive.

1 (g) On or before December 31, 2025, the Task Force shall report its findings and
2 recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State
3 Government Article, the General Assembly.

4 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

5 (a) On or before December 31, 2025, the State Department of Education shall
6 update regulations on student attendance to:

7 (1) incorporate the most effective practices identified by the Task Force to
8 Improve Attendance and Reduce Chronic Absenteeism in Schools established under Section
9 1 of this Act; and

10 (2) adopt regulations that include common definitions for chronic absence,
11 chronic absenteeism, and day of attendance.

12 (b) On or before June 30, 2026, the Department shall distribute the following
13 developed by the Task Force:

14 (1) the toolkit on identifying and preventing chronic absenteeism for school
15 leaders; and

16 (2) to each local school system in the State, guidance on identifying and
17 preventing chronic absenteeism that:

18 (i) defines chronic absenteeism;

19 (ii) identifies and analyzes trends in data on attendance and chronic
20 absenteeism at the State and local level;

21 (iii) includes an analysis of how student attendance is collected in
22 local school systems across the State; and

23 (iv) describes the most effective practices for identifying, preventing,
24 and eliminating chronic absenteeism that are culturally responsive and nonpunitive.

25 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
26 1, 2025. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 6 months and, at the end of
27 December 31, 2026, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall
28 be abrogated and of no further force and effect.