

HOUSE BILL 879

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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**

Introduced and read first time: January 30, 2025

Assigned to: Ways and Means

A BILL ENTITLED

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.

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

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

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

17 (3) the following members, appointed by the State Superintendent of
18 Schools:

19 (i) one county superintendent of schools;

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

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



- 1 (iii) one school-based administrator;
- 2 (iv) one public school teacher;
- 3 (v) one school counselor;
- 4 (vi) one parent of a student enrolled in a public school;
- 5 (vii) one pupil personnel worker;
- 6 (viii) one representative of a teacher's union;
- 7 (ix) one representative of an institution of higher education;
- 8 (x) one representative of a nationally recognized educational
9 organization with expertise in student attendance or chronic absenteeism; and
- 10 (xi) any other individuals with expertise the State Superintendent
11 determines is relevant to the work of the Task Force.

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

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

14 (e) A member of the Task Force:

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

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

18 (f) The Task Force shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 (7) make recommendations on:

8 (i) a single definition of chronic absenteeism;

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 (1) incorporate the most effective practices identified by the Task Force to
23 Improve Attendance and Reduce Chronic Absenteeism in Schools established under Section
24 1 of this Act; and

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

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

29 (1) the toolkit on identifying and preventing chronic absenteeism for school
30 leaders; and

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

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- 1 (i) defines chronic absenteeism;
- 2 (ii) identifies and analyzes trends in data on attendance and chronic
3 absenteeism at the State and local level;
- 4 (iii) includes an analysis of how student attendance is collected in
5 local school systems across the State; and
- 6 (iv) describes the most effective practices for identifying, preventing,
7 and eliminating chronic absenteeism that are culturally responsive and nonpunitive.

8 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
9 1, 2025. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 6 months and, at the end of
10 December 31, 2026, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall
11 be abrogated and of no further force and effect.