

Chapter 630

(House Bill 575)

AN ACT concerning

Public Schools – Student Attendance – Excused *or Discretionary* Absences for Civic Engagement

FOR the purpose of requiring ~~the student attendance policy of the State Department of Education and~~ each county board of education to ~~adopt a certain attendance policy for public school students who are engaged in certain civic~~ *include a provision allowing an excused or discretionary absence for a public school student participating in civic engagement* activities; requiring a county board to adopt certain policies and procedures; and generally relating to student attendance in public schools and excused *or discretionary* absences.

BY adding to

Article – Education

Section 7–301.4

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2025 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Education

7–301.4.

(A) IN THIS SECTION, “PUBLIC FACING LEGISLATIVE BODY” MEANS AN ENTITY THAT:

(1) MEETS TO SET OR CARRY OUT PUBLIC POLICY;

(2) IS SUBJECT TO THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT; AND

(3) CONSISTS OF MEMBERS WHO ARE ELECTED OR APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR OR A LOCAL EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY.

~~**(B) (1) SUBJECT TO SUBSECTION (B) (C) OF THIS SECTION, THE DEPARTMENT AND EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL ADOPT AN ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS THAT TREATS A STUDENT’S ABSENCE AS EXCUSED IF, DURING A REGULAR SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY A PUBLIC FACING BODY, THE STUDENT:**~~

(B) (1) THE STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY OF A COUNTY BOARD SHALL INCLUDE A PROVISION ALLOWING AN EXCUSED OR DISCRETIONARY ABSENCE FOR A PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT PARTICIPATING IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES.

(2) CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES SHALL INCLUDE:

~~(I) TESTIFIES TESTIFYING VIRTUALLY OR IN PERSON AT A HEARING OF ANY COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY A PUBLIC FACING LEGISLATIVE BODY; OR~~

~~(II) CONDUCTS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING:~~

~~1. MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS MEMBERS OF THE A PUBLIC FACING LEGISLATIVE BODY; AND~~

~~2. (III) ADVOCATING FOR OR AGAINST LEGISLATION AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE CONSIDERATION, DEVELOPMENT, OR IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY ISSUES; AND~~

~~3. OTHER ACTIVITIES DEEMED TO BE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BY THE DEPARTMENT AND THE APPLICABLE COUNTY BOARD OR AND~~

~~(III) (IV) PARTICIPATES PARTICIPATING IN THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY PAGE PROGRAM.~~

~~(2) (3) (I) IF THE ATTENDANCE POLICY REQUIRES A NOTE TO EXCUSE AN ABSENCE, THE POLICY SHALL AUTHORIZE AN APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATIVE TO PROVIDE A NOTE OR REASONABLE DOCUMENTATION TO EXCUSE THE STUDENT’S ABSENCE.~~

~~(H) AN EXCUSED ABSENCE UNDER THIS SECTION IS A LAWFUL ABSENCE AND MAY NOT BE INCLUDED IN A CALCULATION OF CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM FOR THE STUDENT OR THE SCHOOL.~~

~~(B) (C) (1) A COUNTY BOARD SHALL ADOPT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION.~~

~~(2) POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ADOPTED UNDER THIS SUBSECTION SHALL AUTHORIZE A STUDENT TO BE EXCUSED FOR AT:~~

~~(I) AT LEAST 15 HOURS OR 2 SCHOOL DAYS TO TESTIFY OR CONDUCT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES UNDER SUBSECTION (A)(1) (B)(1)(I) OR (H) OF THIS SECTION; OR~~

~~(H) THE LENGTH OF TIME OF THE PAGE PROGRAM FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CONDUCTED UNDER SUBSECTION (B)(1)(H) OF THIS SECTION.~~

~~(3) EXCUSED ABSENCES FOR TESTIFYING OR CONDUCTING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES UNDER SUBSECTION (B)(1) OF THIS SECTION SHALL BE IN ADDITION TO ANY EXCUSED ABSENCES UNDER EXISTING POLICIES OR PROCEDURES OF THE COUNTY BOARD.~~

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

Approved by the Governor, May 26, 2026.