

Testimony in Support of the Parental School Engagement Leave Act
Senator Joanne C. Benson
SB058

Good afternoon, Chair Pamela Beidle, Vice Chair Anthon Hayes, and esteemed members of the Finance Legislative Body/Committee.

My name is Brannndon Jackson, and I am a concerned parent and community advocate. Here, to express my enthusiastic support for the Parental School Engagement Leave Act. This critical piece of legislation aims to empower parents and guardians to actively participate in their children's education by giving them the necessary leave to attend school-related activities.

The Importance of Parental Engagement:

1. **Academic Success:** Numerous studies have shown that parental involvement is key to a child's academic success. According to research from the National Education Association (NEA), students with engaged parents are more likely to earn higher grades, attend school regularly, and graduate. The Parental School Engagement Leave Act ensures that parents have the opportunity to be present during pivotal moments in their children's academic journey.
2. **Behavior and Attitude:** Engaged parents positively influence their children's behavior and attitudes toward school. A report from the Harvard Family Research Project found that children with involved parents exhibit better social skills, improved behavior, and a greater sense of responsibility. By granting parents leave to participate in school activities, we are fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment.
3. **Bridging Gaps:** The act addresses the barriers faced by working parents who struggle to balance their professional responsibilities with their desire to be involved in their children's education. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that over 60% of families have both parents working. Providing dedicated leave for school engagement activities will help bridge the gap, allowing parents to be present without fear of job-related repercussions.

Key Provisions of the Act:

- **Leave Entitlement:** Parents and guardians shall be entitled to a specified number of hours per year of paid or unpaid leave to participate in school-related activities, including parent-teacher conferences, school events, and volunteer opportunities.
- **Eligibility:** The leave shall be available to all parents and guardians of school-aged children, regardless of their employment status, ensuring inclusivity and equal access.
- **Flexibility:** Employers shall provide reasonable flexibility in scheduling leave to accommodate the diverse needs of families and the varying schedules of school events.

Personal Experience:

As a parent, I have personally experienced the challenges of balancing work commitments with my desire to be actively involved in my child's education. The Parental School Engagement Leave Act would have provided me with the assurance and support needed to attend important school functions without the stress of navigating work schedules. This legislation is not just a policy change; it is a lifeline for families striving to be more engaged in their children's academic lives.

In conclusion, the Parental School Engagement Leave Act is a vital step towards creating a more equitable and supportive educational system. By supporting this act, we are investing in the future of our children, strengthening family bonds, and promoting a culture of collaboration between schools and families. I urge you to vote in favor of this legislation and make a meaningful difference in the lives of our community's families.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully, Brannndon Jackson, Chair for Prince George's County School Board and A Caring Parent. Sincer

Sincerely,

Brannndon Jackson