

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 147

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

216th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED OCTOBER 22, 2015

Sponsored by:

Senator M. TERESA RUIZ

District 29 (Essex)

Senator STEPHEN M. SWEENEY

District 3 (Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Turner

SYNOPSIS

Urges DOE and school districts to develop creative solutions to address chronic absenteeism.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 1/12/2016)

- 1 **A SENATE RESOLUTION** urging the Department of Education to
2 work with school districts to develop creative solutions to
3 address chronic absenteeism.
4
- 5 **WHEREAS**, Chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10 percent or
6 more of school days in a school year, is a nationwide issue with
7 lasting consequences for a child’s academic future; and
- 8 **WHEREAS**, According to an Advocates for Children of New Jersey
9 report released in September 2015, more than 125,0000 or
10 approximately 10 percent of New Jersey students in grades K-12
11 were chronically absent during the 2013-2014 school year; and
- 12 **WHEREAS**, The problem is exacerbated in the State’s 177 “high-
13 absenteeism” districts, in which the average rate of chronic
14 absenteeism in the 2013-2014 school year was 16 percent; and
- 15 **WHEREAS**, Chronic absenteeism is most prevalent at the beginning
16 and end of students’ formal education, with the highest percentages
17 occurring in kindergarten and high school; and
- 18 **WHEREAS**, The long-term negative impacts of chronic absenteeism
19 include reading difficulties, lower gains in math skills and general
20 knowledge, lower test scores, poor attendance in future school
21 years, and weaker social-emotional skills; and
- 22 **WHEREAS**, Chronic absenteeism affects not only the individual
23 student but also the entire classroom, as teachers must utilize
24 valuable instruction time to review lessons for students who missed
25 school; and
- 26 **WHEREAS**, Students who continue a pattern of chronic absenteeism
27 are at higher risk of eventually dropping out of school; and
- 28 **WHEREAS**, Students from low-income families and students of color
29 are more likely to become chronically absent, and poor attendance
30 is a contributing factor to the achievement gap of these student
31 populations; and
- 32 **WHEREAS**, Effectively addressing the issue of chronic absenteeism
33 requires an understanding of the underlying barriers to student
34 attendance, which can include unstable housing, unreliable
35 transportation, and health-related issues; and
- 36 **WHEREAS**, Creative school strategies, such as positive parent
37 engagement and the implementation of preventive, supportive
38 measures, have been shown to significantly improve student
39 attendance and help reverse the problems caused by chronic
40 absenteeism; and
- 41 **WHEREAS**, Recommendations for schools to reduce chronic
42 absenteeism include: helping students and parents understand the
43 importance of coming to school every day; identifying attendance
44 problems as early as possible; notifying parents immediately when
45 a pattern of absenteeism develops; creating positive reinforcements
46 for excellent or improved attendance; providing mentors for at-risk
47 students; and fostering positive relationships between schools and
48 families; and

1 **WHEREAS**, In New Jersey, the Paterson and Woodbine School
2 Districts are exemplary success stories of how implementing best
3 practices to combat poor student attendance can dramatically
4 reduce the number of chronically absent children; and

5 **WHEREAS**, In Paterson's School 5, an elementary school with more
6 than 95 percent of its students considered economically
7 disadvantaged, chronic absenteeism decreased by 76 percent in just
8 one year after implementing successful practices that included
9 mentors for at-risk students, a community walk-to-school program,
10 and rewards for improved attendance; and

11 **WHEREAS**, In Woodbine Elementary, there were only three
12 chronically absent children in the 2013-2014 school year following
13 the implementation of best practices, which included repeatedly
14 highlighting the importance of coming to school, issuing special
15 certificates for improved attendance, and reaching out to parents at
16 the first sign of an attendance problem; and

17 **WHEREAS**, By utilizing these examples and other proven best
18 practices, the Department of Education and school districts can
19 work collaboratively to develop creative solutions to reduce chronic
20 absenteeism and increase the chances of academic success for our
21 State's children; now, therefore,

22

23 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

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25 1. This House urges the Department of Education and local
26 school districts to work collaboratively to develop and implement
27 creative solutions to address the issue of chronic absenteeism in
28 New Jersey's public schools.

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30 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
31 shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the
32 Commissioner of Education and to the State Board of Education to
33 be distributed to each board of education in the State.

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36 STATEMENT

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38 This resolution urges the Department of Education and local
39 school districts to work collaboratively to develop and implement
40 creative solutions to address the issue of chronic absenteeism in
41 New Jersey's public schools. Chronic absenteeism, defined as
42 missing 10 percent or more of school days in a school year, is a
43 nationwide problem that impacts a child's chances of long-term
44 academic success. A report issued by Advocates for Children of
45 New Jersey in September 2015 reveals that more than 125,000 or
46 approximately 10 percent of New Jersey students in grades K-12
47 were chronically absent during the 2013-2014 school year. The
48 long-term negative impacts of chronic absenteeism include reading

1 difficulties, lower gains in math skills and general knowledge,
2 lower test scores, poor attendance in future school years, and
3 weaker social-emotional skills. In addition, students with a
4 continued pattern of chronic absenteeism are at higher risk of
5 eventually dropping out of school.

6 In order to effectively address the issue of chronic absenteeism,
7 an understanding of the underlying barriers to student attendance,
8 which may include unstable housing, unreliable transportation, and
9 health-related issues, is necessary. Creative school strategies, such
10 as positive parent engagement and the implementation of
11 preventive, supportive measures, have been shown to significantly
12 improve student attendance and help reverse the problems caused
13 by chronic absenteeism. The Paterson and Woodbine School
14 Districts in New Jersey are exemplary success stories of how
15 implementing best practices to combat poor student attendance can
16 dramatically reduce the number of chronically absent children. By
17 utilizing these examples and other proven strategies, the
18 Department of Education and school districts can work
19 collaboratively to develop creative solutions to reduce chronic
20 absenteeism and increase the chances of academic success for the
21 State's children.