

ASSEMBLY APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 2192

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 22, 2018

The Assembly Appropriations Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 2192.

This bill requires public schools to develop a corrective action plan to improve absenteeism rates if 10 percent or more of the students enrolled in the school are chronically absent.

The bill requires that the corrective action plan: (1) identify problems and barriers to school attendance; (2) develop recommendations to address those problems and barriers; (3) outline communication strategies to educate parents on the importance of school attendance; (4) establish protocols on informing and engaging parents when a child begins to show a pattern of absences; and (5) review school policies to ensure that they support improved school attendance. In developing the corrective action plan, the school must solicit input from parents through multiple means, including through the administration of a survey, engagement with the school's parent organization, and, if the school does not have a parent organization, by holding a public meeting to provide parents with the opportunity to provide input. The bill requires the school to present its corrective action plan to the board of education. The bill requires that the school annually review and revise the plan, and present any revisions to the board, until the percent of students who are chronically absent is less than 10 percent.

Additionally, the bill requires the Commissioner of Education to include on School Report Cards data on the number and percentage of students who were chronically absent and the number and percentage of students who received a disciplinary suspension. The bill directs the commissioner to review the chronic absenteeism rates of each school and school district annually, and report on the rates to the State Board of Education.

The term "chronically absent," as used in the bill, will be defined pursuant to rules and regulations promulgated by the Commissioner of Education within 90 days after the bill's enactment.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Office of Legislative Services estimates that this bill will not lead to a change in State expenditures. The current School Performance Report already includes data related to student suspensions and chronic absenteeism.

This bill may result in an indeterminate increase in a school district's expenditures if, in at least one school in the district, 10 percent or more of the students are considered chronically absent, thereby triggering the development of a corrective action plan. The potential cost would be contingent on the strategy implemented by the school, such as less costly options (*e.g.*, increased communication and outreach) to potentially more expensive options (*e.g.*, hiring additional attendance officers).

Based on data included in the School Performance Report for the 2015-2016 school year, nearly one-third of schools had at least 10 percent of their students classified as chronically absent. The School Performance Report defines chronically absent as being absent for at least 10 percent of the days that a student is enrolled in a school.