



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20004**

Charles Allen
Councilmember, Ward 6
Chairperson
Committee on Transportation and the Environment

Committee Member
Business and Economic Development
Health
The Judiciary & Public Safety

March 25, 2024

Nyasha Smith, Secretary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Secretary Smith:

Today, along with Councilmembers Kenyan R. McDuffie, Brianne K. Nadeau, Brooke Pinto, and Robert C. White, Jr., I am introducing the ***“Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy Reduction Amendment Act of 2024”***. Please find enclosed a signed copy of the legislation.

The persistently high chronic absenteeism and truancy rates in the District’s schools demand an immediate and coordinated response. As way of background, a student is deemed chronically absent when they miss 10% or more of the school year, regardless of whether the absence was excused or unexcused. A student is deemed truant when they accrue more than 10 unexcused absences.

For School Year 2022-2023, data released by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education shows that two in five students in the District were chronically absent. When looking at high school, those figures tell a sobering story: three in five high school students were chronically absent from school last year. More troubling is that almost half of high school students were deemed truant, with 11 high schools having truancy rates above 70%.

Missing out on school means that students run the risk of falling behind on meeting educational or achievement milestones, as well as the social supports and skills needed once a student graduates from high school, like entering the workforce or college. There is a litany of reasons for why students miss class, ranging from arriving late due to taking a sibling to another campus, lack of reliable public transit, trouble in the home, or violence in their neighborhood. Students need to be in school, and our schools need to be resourced to do the difficult work of providing students with a safe and welcome learning environment.

This legislation proposes that:

- **Schools with a chronic absenteeism rate above 20% should be designated as priority areas for the Safe Passages Safe Blocks program by School Year 2027-2028.** Unsafe commutes or neighborhood violence are often reasons why a student isn't in school. The Safe Passages program includes highly visible, trained adults along routes in the morning and the afternoon, as well as conflict resolution, mediation services, and community relationship-building to keep students safe and improve student attendance. However, it doesn't reach all the schools that need it.
- **A new additional funding category be added to school budgets specifically to address chronic absenteeism.** Currently, the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula, the metric used to calculate school budgets, does not provide funding for schools based on chronic absenteeism. The data bears out these schools, which have historically seen underinvestment, have the highest levels of chronic absenteeism. This makes sense, as these schools are often serving a higher percentage of children coming from unstable situations outside of school walls that demand a more substantive response than most schools need to provide.
- **Schools must meet and intervene with a student after accruing five unexcused absences in a marking period. This intervention must take place before referring the student to the Child and Family Services Agency or the Office of the Attorney General.** Regulations currently require the School Support Team intervene with a student after five unexcused absences in one marking period. However, not every student gets an intervention meeting before being referred to CFSA or OAG. Setting the intervention point as a requirement *before referral* would make this existing intervention more effective. This must be paired with additional resources to ensure these interventions are happening.
- **School principals be given the authority to choose how to use additional at-risk or chronically absent funding allocated to the school.** Currently, there is no transparency over how at-risk funding is used or how additional dollars for chronic absenteeism would be spent. These additional dollars are supplemental and should not be used to cover core costs. Principals know their schools and their students best and should be given the authority to allocate how these additional dollars are spent.
- **The Department of Human Services and the student's school to submit status reports to each other on a student's participation in a diversion program and attendance in school.** This requirement is meant to ensure everyone involved with the child can understand what's happening. Right now, referrals to DHS feel like they go into a black hole that make it harder to ensure these interventions are happening.

- **The Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement expand its Leadership Academy program to the top five high schools and corresponding feeder middle schools where the rate of chronic absenteeism is highest.** The ONSE Leadership Academy pairs students struggling with attendance, behavior, and schoolwork challenges with professionals and mentors who help them through those with case management. As Chair of the Committee on the Judiciary and Public Safety, I doubled the Leadership Academy at DC schools, but it is still only at three high schools and their corresponding feeder middle schools.

Please feel free to reach out to me or my Legislative Director, Antonio Nunes, with any questions or for additional information.

Sincerely,



Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6
Chairperson, Committee on Transportation & the Environment
Chair, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

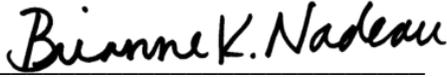
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Councilmember Kenyan R. McDuffie



Councilmember Charles Allen



Councilmember Brianne K. Nadeau



Councilmember Brooke Pinto



Councilmember Robert C. White, Jr.

A BILL

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To amend the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice Establishment Act of 2011 to require that schools be designated as priority areas for the Safe Passages Safe Blocks program according to a specified timetable and chronic absenteeism rate; to amend the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results Amendment Act of 2016 to require the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement to provide Leadership Academy services to the top 5 high schools and corresponding feeder middle school where the rate of chronic absenteeism is highest; to amend Article II of An Act To provide for compulsory school attendance, for the taking of a school census in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes, to require that an educational institution meet and intervene with a minor student prior to referring the minor student to the Child and Family Services Agency or the Office of the Attorney General, to require the Department of Human Services and the minor student's educational institution to submit status reports to each other on a minor student's participation in a diversion program and attendance in school; to amend the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula for Public Schools and Public Charter Schools and Tax Conformity Clarification Amendment Act of 1998 to create a new additional funding category for students who are chronically absent; and to amend the Schools First in Budgeting Amendment Act of 2022 to permit the principal of a school to allocate how additional at-risk or chronically absent funding allocated to the school shall be spent.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the "Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy Reduction Amendment Act of 2024".

66 Sec. 3. The Neighborhood Engagement Achieves Results Amendment Act of 2016,
67 effective June 30, 2016 (D.C. Law 21-125; D.C. Official Code § 7-2411 *et seq.*), is amended as
68 follows:

69 (a) Section 102 (D.C. Official Code § 7-2411) is amended as follows:

70 (1) Subsection (a) is amended as follows:

71 (A) Paragraph (3) is amended by striking the phrase “; and” and inserting a
72 semicolon in its place.

73 (B) Paragraph (4) is amended by striking the period and inserting the phrase
74 “; and” in its place.

75 (C) A new paragraph (5) is added to read as follows:

76 “(5) The Leadership Academy, which shall serve students at participating schools
77 to promote positive outcomes for youth by fostering relationships with caring adults, engaging
78 youth in experiences that promote growth and personal learning, and creating environments where
79 youth feel safe and cared for.”.

80 (2) Subsection (b) is amended as follows:

81 (A) Paragraph (6) is amended by striking the phrase “; and” and inserting a
82 semicolon in its place.

83 (B) Paragraph (7) is amended by striking the period and inserting the phrase
84 “; and” in its place.

85 (C) A new paragraph (8) is added to read as follows:

86 “(8) Collaborating with District agencies to administer the Leadership Academy
87 and identifying schools pursuant to section 103c of the Neighborhood Engagement Achieves

88 Results Amendment Act of 2016, effective June 30, 2016 (D.C. Law 21-125; D.C. Official Code
89 § 7-2411 *et seq.*”).

90 (b) A new section 103c is added to read as follows:

91 “Sec. 103c. Leadership Academy services.

92 “ONSE shall, in coordination with the Deputy Mayor for Education, Office of the State
93 Superintendent of Education, and the District of Columbia Public Schools, offer Leadership
94 Academy services to the five high schools with the highest rates of chronic absenteeism, as defined
95 in section 1(1A) of Article I of An Act To provide for compulsory school attendance, for the taking
96 of a school census in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes, approved February 4, 1925
97 (43 Stat. 806; D.C. Official Code § 38-201(1A)), and their corresponding feeder middle school.”.

98 Sec. 4. Act II of An Act To provide for compulsory school attendance, for the taking of a
99 school census in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes, approved February 4, 1925 (43
100 Stat. 806; D.C. Official Code § 38-201 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:

101 (a) Section 7(c) (D.C. Official Code § 38-208(c)) is amended by adding a new paragraph
102 (3) to read as follows:

103 “(3) The educational institution, after five unexcused absences in a marking period,
104 and prior to referring the minor student according to the requirements set forth in paragraph (1) of
105 this subsection, shall:

106 “(A) Meet and intervene with the student; and

107 “(B) Develop an action plan and strategies that are school-based or
108 community-based to enhance the minor student’s attendance.”.

109 (b) Section 8 (D.C. Official Code § 38-209) is amended to read as follows:

110 “Sec. 8. Reporting requirements.

111 “(a) By July 15 of each year, beginning in 2014, the Office of the Attorney General shall
112 submit to the Mayor and the Secretary to the Council a truancy status report on the preceding
113 school year, which shall include the number of:

114 “(1) Referrals it received from each educational institution;

115 “(2) Cases it filed pursuant to this act, and the outcome of each;

116 “(3) Child-in-need of supervision cases filed pursuant to this act, and the outcome
117 of each; and

118 “(4) Students who were enrolled in a court diversion program, or other diversion
119 program pursuant to this act.

120 “(b) On the first day of each month, the Department of Human Services shall provide a
121 status report detailing the progress of a minor student enrolled in a diversion program administered
122 by the agency to the educational institution where the minor student is enrolled.

123 “(c) On the first day of each month, the educational institution where the minor student is
124 enrolled shall provide a report detailing the minor student’s attendance in school to the diversion
125 program where the minor student is enrolled.”.

126 Sec. 5. The Uniform Per Student Funding Formula for Public Schools and Public Charter
127 Schools and Tax Conformity Clarification Amendment Act of 1998, effective March 26, 1999
128 (D.C. Law 12-207; D.C. Official Code § 38-2901 *et seq.*), is amended as follows:

129 (a) Section 102 (D.C. Official Code § 38-2901) is amended by adding a new paragraph
130 (2D) to read as follows:

131 “(2D) “Chronically absent” means a student who misses more than 10% of school
132 days, including excused and unexcused absences, pursuant to section 1(1A) of Article I of An Act
133 To provide for compulsory school attendance, for the taking of a school census in the District of

134 Columbia, and for other purposes, approved February 4, 1925 (43 Stat. 806; D.C. Official Code §
135 38-201(1A)).”.

136 (b) Section 106(c) (D.C. Official Code § 38-2905(c)) is amended as follows:

137 (1) Subsection (a-1) is amended by striking the phrase “as at-risk” and inserting the
138 phrase “as at-risk or chronically absent” in its place.

139 (2) The General Education Add-ons tabular array is amended by adding a new row
140 at the bottom of the tabular array to read as follows:

“Chronically absent	Additional funding for students who are chronically absent	0.1	\$1,305
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141 (c) Section 106a (D.C. Official Code § 38-2905.01) is amended as follows:

142 (1) Subsection (a) is amended by striking the phrase “as at-risk” and inserting the
143 phrase “as at-risk or chronically absent” in its place.

144 (2) Subsection (c) is amended by striking the phrase “at-risk students” and inserting
145 the phrase “at-risk or chronically absent students” in its place.

146 Sec. 6. Section 105(c) of the Schools First in Budgeting Amendment Act of 2022, effective
147 March 10, 2023 (D.C. Law 24-300; D.C. Official Code § 38-2851.04(c)), is amended to read as
148 follows:

149 “(c)(1) Funds provided to schools pursuant to section 106a of the Uniform Per Student
150 Funding Formula for Public Schools and Public Charter Schools and Tax Conformity Clarification
151 Amendment Act of 1998, effective March 26, 1999 (D.C. Law 12-207; D.C. Official Code § 38-
152 2905.01), shall be available to the principal to use at the principal’s discretion, in consultation with
153 the school’s local advisory school team, for the purpose of improving student achievement and
154 attendance among at-risk or chronically absent students.

155 “(2) After consultation with the school’s local school advisory team, a principal
156 shall submit to the Chancellor and make publicly available a written at-risk funds spending plan
157 delineating how funds allocated pursuant to section 106a of the Uniform Per Student Funding
158 Formula for Public Schools and Public Charter Schools and Tax Conformity Clarification
159 Amendment Act of 1998, effective March 26, 1999 (D.C. Law 12-207; D.C. Official Code § 38-
160 2905.01), will be used and explaining how the uses identified by the principal and local school
161 advisory team will prove student achievement and attendance among at-risk or chronically
162 students.

163 “(3) The Chancellor may review and amend a school’s at-risk funds spending plan;
164 provided, that if the Chancellor amends a school’s at-risk funds spending plan, the Chancellor shall
165 provide to the principal and make publicly available a written justification for the amendment,
166 including how the amendment will improve student achievement and attendance among at-risk or
167 chronically absent students.

168 “(4) By February 1 of each year, the Chancellor shall make available to the public
169 and submit to the Council committee with jurisdiction over DCPS the final at-risk funds spending
170 plan of each school for the following fiscal year.”.

171 Sec. 7. Fiscal impact statement.

172 The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement of the Budget Director as the fiscal impact
173 statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved
174 October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

175 Sec. 8. Effective date.

176 This act shall take effect following approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the
177 Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as

178 provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24,
179 1973 (87 Stat. 788; D.C. Official Code §1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of
180 Columbia Register.