



March 22, 2024

The Honorable Jared Bauman
702 Capitol Avenue, Room 413C
Kentucky Capitol Annex Building
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Representative Bauman:

I'm writing to you on behalf of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence regarding House Bill 611 on student truancy. We agree that chronic absenteeism and truancy among students are critical issues in Kentucky, especially post-pandemic, and we support your efforts to improve attendance.

Drawing on the research regarding attendance and absenteeism, we submit the attached recommended amendments to help ensure the bill will address attendance issues from every angle. The following amendments reflect evidenced-based strategies¹ and will help strengthen current statutory law addressing truancy and habitual truancy, respond to the root issues affecting attendance, and guard against counterproductive approaches that could unnecessarily route students into the punitive measures of the juvenile justice system as enumerated in HB 611.

A summary of the attached amendments is below:

- Provide parental and student notice of the state and local district board policy for irregular attendance, truancy, and habitual truancy;
- Require the local board of education to develop an early warning system policy that connects students and families with the support to reengage in academic learning;
- Provide clear, supportive, and solution-oriented communication with families and caregivers of students;
- Administer academic, systemic, and economic supports for the families of students, including removing barriers to students attending school as well as providing opportunities for tutoring and mentoring for students who are reengaging in the classroom;
- Offer incentives and celebrations of students' improved attendance and engagement in the classroom;
- Provide information regarding community-based organizations that are available to assist in providing services ensuring student attendance at school;

¹ Chang, Hedy and Romero, Mariajose, Present, Engaged and Accounted For: [The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades](#), National Center for Children in Poverty, New York, NY, September 2008;

Balfanz, Robert, Lisa Herzog and Douglas J. MacIver, [Preventing Student Disengagement and Keeping Students on the Graduation Path in Urban Middle-Grades Schools: Early Identification and Effective Interventions](#), Educational Psychologist, 42(4), 223–235, 2007.

- Facilitate attendance fulfillment strategies to ensure that the basic needs of students in attending school are met; and
- Retain the current statutory diversion agreement duration of not exceeding six (6) months, which will ensure better outcomes for students in attendance and minimize long-lasting judicial consequences.

The Prichard Committee welcomes a discussion with you as the bill's primary sponsor. We stand ready to engage in a constructive dialogue with you and work toward solutions that align with our shared goal of advancing the highest quality of education in Kentucky.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brigitte Blom". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Brigitte Blom
President & CEO
Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence