



March 22, 2024

The Honorable Stephen West
702 Capital Avenue
Annex Room 228
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

CC: The Honorable James Tipton

Senator West:

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

Drawing on evidenced-based strategies¹ regarding attendance and absenteeism, we submit the attached recommended amendments to the relevant Kentucky Revised Statutes. These amendments will help to 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;

¹ Chang, Hedy and Romero, Marijose, 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.

- Provide information regarding community-based organizations that are available to assist in providing services ensuring student attendance at school;
- Facilitate attendance fulfillment strategies to ensure that the basic needs of students in attending school are met; and
- Retain the original length of diversion agreements regarding children attending school not to exceed six (6) months

The Prichard Committee welcomes a discussion on this issue. 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 signature is fluid and cursive, with "Brigitte" on the top line and "Blom" on the bottom line.

Brigitte Blom
President & CEO
Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence

Building a Groundswell for a Big, Bold Future

2285 Executive Drive, Suite 120 | Lexington, KY 40505 |
prichardcommittee.org | 859-233-9849 | admin@prichardcommittee.org