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SENATE BILL 25

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014

INTRODUCED BY

Craig W. Brandt

AN ACT

RELATING TO PUBLIC EDUCATION; ADDING TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CODE
AN EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND NOTIFICATION AND IMMEDIATE
INTERVENTION SYSTEM TO PREVENT UNEXCUSED ABSENCES, HABITUAL
TRUANCY AND WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL; PROVIDING FOR THE
SUSPENSION OR POSTPONEMENT OF DRIVING PRIVILEGES OF SCHOOL-AGE
PERSONS IN VIOLATION OF THE COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE LAW
UPON A HEARING BY THE MOTOR VEHICLE DIVISION OF THE TAXATION
AND REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. Section 22-12-2 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1967,
Chapter 16, Section 170, as amended by Laws 2007, Chapter 307,
Section 6 and by Laws 2007, Chapter 308, Section 6) is amended
to read:

"22-12-2. COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE [RESPONSIBILITY]--

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1 WITHDRAWAL REQUIREMENTS--SUSPENSION OR DENIAL OF DRIVING
2 PRIVILEGES--APPEAL TO SCHOOL DISTRICT, DEPARTMENT AND DISTRICT
3 COURT.--

4 A. Except as otherwise provided, a school-age
5 person shall attend public school, private school, home school
6 or a state institution until the school-age person is at least
7 eighteen years of age unless that person has graduated from
8 high school or received a general educational development
9 certificate. [~~A parent may give written, signed permission for~~
10 ~~the school-age person to leave school in case of hardship~~
11 ~~approved by the local superintendent.~~]

12 B. A school-age person subject to the provisions of
13 the Compulsory School Attendance Law shall attend school for at
14 least the length of time of the school year that is established
15 in the school district in which the person is a resident or the
16 state-chartered charter school in which the person is enrolled,
17 and the school district or state-chartered charter school shall
18 not excuse a student from attending school except as provided
19 in that law or for parent-authorized medical reasons.

20 C. Any parent of a school-age person subject to the
21 provisions of the Compulsory School Attendance Law is
22 responsible for the school attendance of that person.

23 D. A school-age person who is subject to the
24 provisions of the Compulsory School Attendance Law shall not
25 withdraw from a public school unless:

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1 (1) the parent of the school-age person
2 provides written documentation of the person's enrollment in
3 another public school or a private school or a home school
4 operated pursuant to the provisions of Section 22-1-2.1 NMSA
5 1978;

6 (2) the school receives:

7 (a) written documentation of the school-
8 age person's illness;

9 (b) written documentation of a financial
10 hardship causing the school-age person to be employed full time
11 to support the person's family; or

12 (c) an order by a court that has
13 jurisdiction over the school-age person; or

14 (3) at an exit interview:

15 (a) the school-age person, the parent of
16 the school-age person and the school principal meet to discuss
17 the intention to withdraw from school;

18 (b) the school-age person and the parent
19 of the school-age person sign a written acknowledgment that a
20 withdrawal from school is likely to diminish the future
21 earnings and long-term employment prospects of the school-age
22 person; and

23 (c) the school principal agrees to the
24 withdrawal and signs the written acknowledgment signed by the
25 school-age person and the parent of the school-age person.

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1 E. Starting with the 2015-2016 school year, when a
2 school-age person in grade eight through twelve withdraws from
3 a public school without meeting the requirements in Subsection
4 D of this section:

5 (1) a school may provide to the school-age
6 person's parent a notice of noncompliance with the Compulsory
7 School Attendance Law containing:

8 (a) the name, date of birth and address
9 of the school-age person;

10 (b) a statement that the school-age
11 person is in noncompliance with the Compulsory School
12 Attendance Law due to withdrawal from school without meeting
13 the requirements of Subsection D of this section; and

14 (c) notice of the opportunity to request
15 a meeting with the school principal or head administrator
16 within two weeks to: 1) commit to returning to school and
17 complying with the Compulsory School Attendance Law; or 2)
18 provide evidence that the school-age person is no longer
19 subject to the Compulsory School Attendance Law;

20 (2) a school district or state-chartered
21 charter school may provide to the school-age person's parent
22 and the motor vehicle division of the taxation and revenue
23 department a certification of noncompliance with the Compulsory
24 School Attendance Law no fewer than thirty days after the
25 notice of noncompliance with the Compulsory School Attendance

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1 Law is sent to the parent if the school-age person remains
2 noncompliant;

3 (3) upon the motor vehicle division's receipt
4 of a certification of noncompliance with the Compulsory School
5 Attendance Law, the motor vehicle division shall, pursuant to
6 the Motor Vehicle Code, suspend or deny the issuance of an
7 instruction permit, driver's license or provisional license of
8 a school-age person until the school-age person reaches the age
9 of eighteen years; and

10 (4) following the suspension or denial of an
11 instruction permit, driver's license or provisional license,
12 the school-age person may:

13 (a) request a hearing from the school
14 district or state-chartered charter school for the school-age
15 person to provide evidence supporting a request that the school
16 district or state-chartered charter school provide to the motor
17 vehicle division a certification that the school-age person is
18 in compliance with or is no longer subject to the Compulsory
19 School Attendance law;

20 (b) appeal the school district's or
21 state-chartered charter school's determination by requesting a
22 hearing and final decision from the department pursuant to its
23 rules; and

24 (c) appeal the department's final
25 decision to the district court for the county in which the

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1 school-age person resides pursuant to Section 39-3-1.1 NMSA
2 1978.

3 ~~[D-]~~ F. Each local school board and each governing
4 body of a charter school or private school shall enforce the
5 provisions of the Compulsory School Attendance Law for students
6 enrolled in their respective schools."

7 **SECTION 2.** Section 22-12-7 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1967,
8 Chapter 16, Section 175, as amended) is amended to read:

9 "22-12-7. ENFORCEMENT OF ATTENDANCE LAW--HABITUAL
10 TRUANTS--PENALTY--SUSPENSION OR DENIAL OF DRIVING PRIVILEGES--
11 APPEAL TO SCHOOL DISTRICT, DEPARTMENT AND DISTRICT COURT.--

12 A. Each local school board and each governing body
13 of a charter school or private school shall initiate the
14 enforcement of the provisions of the Compulsory School
15 Attendance Law for students enrolled in their respective
16 schools.

17 B. To initiate enforcement of the provisions of the
18 Compulsory School Attendance Law against ~~[an]~~ a student who is
19 a habitual truant, a local school board or governing body of a
20 charter school or private school or its authorized
21 representatives shall give written notice of the habitual
22 truancy by mail to or by personal service on the parent of the
23 student subject to and in noncompliance with the provisions of
24 the Compulsory School Attendance Law. The notice shall include
25 a date, time and place for the parent to meet with the local

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1 school district, charter school or private school to develop
2 intervention strategies that focus on keeping the student in an
3 educational setting.

4 C. If unexcused absences continue after written
5 notice of habitual truancy as provided in Subsection B of this
6 section has occurred, the student shall be reported to the
7 juvenile probation [~~services~~] office of the judicial district
8 where the student resides for an investigation as to whether
9 the student shall be considered to be a neglected child or a
10 child in a family in need of services because of habitual
11 truancy and thus subject to the provisions of the Children's
12 Code. The juvenile probation [~~services~~] office may send a
13 written notice to a parent of the student directing the parent
14 and student to report to the juvenile probation [~~services~~]
15 office to discuss services for the student or the family. [~~In~~
16 ~~addition to any other disposition, the children's court may~~
17 ~~order the habitual truant's driving privileges to be suspended~~
18 ~~for a specified time not to exceed ninety days on the first~~
19 ~~finding of habitual truancy and not to exceed one year for a~~
20 ~~subsequent finding of habitual truancy.~~]

21 D. If, after review by the juvenile probation
22 office where the student resides, a determination and finding
23 is made that the habitual truancy by the student may have been
24 caused by the parent of the student, then the matter [~~will~~]
25 shall be referred by the juvenile probation office to the

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1 district attorney's office or any law enforcement agency having
2 jurisdiction for appropriate investigation and filing of
3 charges allowed under the Compulsory School Attendance Law.
4 Charges against the parent may be filed in metropolitan court,
5 magistrate court or district court.

6 E. A parent of the student who, after receiving
7 written notice as provided in Subsection B of this section and
8 after the matter has been reviewed in accordance with
9 Subsection D of this section, knowingly allows the student to
10 continue to violate the Compulsory School Attendance Law [~~shall~~
11 ~~be~~] is guilty of a petty misdemeanor. Upon the first
12 conviction, a fine of not less than twenty-five dollars
13 (\$25.00) or more than one hundred dollars (\$100) may be
14 imposed, or the parent of the student may be ordered to perform
15 community service. If violations of the Compulsory School
16 Attendance Law continue, upon the second and subsequent
17 convictions, the parent of the student who knowingly allows the
18 student to continue to violate the Compulsory School Attendance
19 Law [~~shall be~~] is guilty of a petty misdemeanor and shall be
20 subject to a fine of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500)
21 or imprisonment for a definite term not to exceed six months or
22 both.

23 F. [~~The provisions of this section shall apply~~
24 ~~beginning July 1, 2004.~~] Starting with the 2015-2016 school
25 year, when a student in grade eight through twelve accumulates

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1 ten or more unexcused absences and becomes a habitual truant:

2 (1) a school may provide to the school-age
3 person's parent a notice of noncompliance with the Compulsory
4 School Attendance Law containing:

5 (a) the name, date of birth and address
6 of the school-age person;

7 (b) a statement that the school-age
8 person is in noncompliance with the Compulsory School
9 Attendance Law due to habitual truancy and the number and dates
10 of unexcused absences; and

11 (c) notice of the opportunity to request
12 a meeting with the school principal or head administrator
13 within two weeks to: 1) commit to returning to school and
14 complying with the Compulsory School Attendance Law; 2) contest
15 the occurrences and number of unexcused absences; or 3) provide
16 evidence that the school-age person is no longer subject to the
17 Compulsory School Attendance Law;

18 (2) a school district or state-chartered
19 charter school may provide to the school-age person's parent
20 and the motor vehicle division of the taxation and revenue
21 department a certification of noncompliance with the Compulsory
22 School Attendance Law no fewer than thirty days after the
23 notice of noncompliance with the Compulsory School Attendance
24 Law is sent to the parent if the school-age person remains
25 noncompliant;

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1 (3) upon the motor vehicle division's receipt
2 of a certification of noncompliance with the Compulsory School
3 Attendance Law, the motor vehicle division shall suspend or
4 deny the issuance of an instruction permit, driver's license or
5 provisional license of a school-age person pursuant to the
6 Motor Vehicle Code until the school-age person reaches the age
7 of eighteen years; and

8 (4) following the suspension or denial of an
9 instruction permit, driver's license or provisional license,
10 the school-age person may:

11 (a) request a hearing from the school
12 district or state-chartered charter school for the school-age
13 person to provide evidence supporting a request that the school
14 district or state-chartered charter school provide to the motor
15 vehicle division a certification that the school-age person is
16 in compliance with or is no longer subject to the Compulsory
17 School Attendance Law;

18 (b) appeal the school district's or
19 state-chartered charter school's determination by requesting a
20 hearing and final decision from the department pursuant to its
21 rules; and

22 (c) appeal the department's final
23 decision to the district court for the county in which the
24 school-age person resides pursuant to Section 39-3-1.1 NMSA
25 1978."

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1 SECTION 3. Section 22-12-8 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1985,
2 Chapter 104, Section 1, as amended) is amended to read:

3 "22-12-8. EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND NOTIFICATION AND
4 IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION SYSTEM FOR UNEXCUSED ABSENCES AND
5 [TRUANCY] WITHDRAWAL RISK FACTORS.--[Notwithstanding the
6 provisions of Section 22-12-7 NMSA 1978, if a student is in
7 need of early intervention, the school district, charter school
8 or private school shall contact the student's parent to inform
9 the parent that the student has unexcused absences from school
10 and to discuss possible interventions. The provisions of this
11 section do not apply to any absence if the parent has contacted
12 the school to explain the absence.]

13 A. The department shall develop, and school
14 districts shall implement, an early identification and
15 notification and immediate intervention system pursuant to this
16 section to minimize unexcused absences and prevent habitual
17 truancy and withdrawal from school.

18 B. When a student accumulates five unexcused
19 absences, the school shall request in writing a meeting and
20 meet with the student's parent to discuss:

- 21 (1) the reasons for the unexcused absences;
- 22 (2) immediate interventions to prevent further
23 unexcused absences;
- 24 (3) parental involvement in preventing further
25 unexcused absences; and

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1 (4) the potential consequences of habitual
2 truancy.

3 C. For each student who demonstrates any risk
4 factor that might lead to withdrawal from school, each school
5 shall provide to the student immediate interventions aligned to
6 the student's next step plan pursuant to Section 22-13-1.1 NMSA
7 1978 and the risk factors demonstrated by the student.

8 D. For a student who demonstrates any risk factor
9 for withdrawing from school, the school shall maintain and
10 provide to the student's parent and the school district a
11 record of each risk factor and immediate intervention taken.

12 E. As used in this section, a "risk factor"
13 includes:

- 14 (1) multiple discipline referrals;
- 15 (2) third grade reading scores below the
16 proficiency level;
- 17 (3) habitual truancy in grades six through
18 nine;
- 19 (4) failing in a course in grades six through
20 nine; or
- 21 (5) a grade point average of 1.5 or below in
22 grade nine."

23 SECTION 4. Section 22-12-9 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 2004,
24 Chapter 28, Section 1, as amended) is amended to read:

25 "22-12-9. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES [~~AND~~], TRUANCY AND

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1 WITHDRAWAL--ATTENDANCE POLICIES.--

2 A. As used in this section and Sections 22-12-7 and
3 22-12-8 NMSA 1978:

4 (1) "habitual truant" means a student who has
5 accumulated the equivalent of ten days or more of unexcused
6 absences within a school year; and

7 [~~(2) "student in need of early intervention"~~
8 ~~means a student who has accumulated five unexcused absences~~
9 ~~within a school year; and~~

10 ~~(3)]~~ (2) "unexcused absence" means an absence
11 from school or classes for which the student does not have an
12 allowable excuse pursuant to the Compulsory School Attendance
13 Law or rules of the local school board or governing authority
14 of a charter school or private school.

15 B. An unexcused absence of two or more classes up
16 to fifty percent of an instructional day shall be counted as
17 one-half day absence, and the unexcused absence of more than
18 fifty percent of an instructional day shall be counted as one
19 full-day absence.

20 C. Each school district and charter school shall
21 maintain an attendance policy that:

22 (1) provides for an early identification [~~of~~
23 ~~students with unexcused absences, students in need of early~~
24 ~~intervention and habitual truants and provides intervention~~
25 ~~strategies that focus on keeping students in need of early~~

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1 ~~intervention in an educational setting and prohibit out-of-~~
2 ~~school suspension and expulsion as the punishment for unexcused~~
3 ~~absences and habitual truancy]~~ and notification and immediate
4 intervention system, pursuant to Section 22-12-8 NMSA 1978, for
5 keeping in an educational setting, without out-of-school
6 suspension or expulsion as a punishment, students who have five
7 or more unexcused absences, students who are habitual truants
8 and students who demonstrate risk factors for withdrawing from
9 school;

10 (2) [~~uses~~] allows withdrawal [~~as provided in~~
11 ~~Section 22-8-2 NMSA 1978~~] only after exhausting intervention
12 efforts to keep students in educational settings;

13 (3) requires that class attendance be taken
14 for every instructional day in every public school or school
15 program in the school district; and

16 (4) provides for schools to document the
17 following for each student identified as an habitual truant:

18 (a) attempts of the school to notify the
19 parent that the student had unexcused absences;

20 (b) attempts of the school to meet with
21 the parent to discuss intervention strategies; and

22 (c) intervention strategies implemented
23 to support keeping the student in school.

24 D. The department shall review and approve school
25 district and charter school attendance policies.

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1 E. School districts and charter schools shall
2 report unexcused absences and habitual truancy rates to the
3 department in a form and at such times as the department
4 determines and shall document intervention efforts made to
5 keep students in need of early intervention and habitual
6 truants in educational settings. Locally chartered charter
7 schools shall provide copies of their reports to the school
8 district.

9 F. Once per semester, each school shall report to
10 the school district, and once per school year, each school
11 district shall report to the department, the number of
12 students who:

- 13 (1) accumulated five unexcused absences;
- 14 (2) accumulated ten unexcused absences;
- 15 (3) withdrew from school pursuant to the
16 provisions of Subsection D of Section 22-12-2 NMSA 1978:
 - 17 (a) with an exit interview; or
 - 18 (b) without an exit interview;
 - 19 (4) stopped attending school during a
20 semester; or
 - 21 (5) failed to return to school after a
22 school break.

23 G. The department shall compile school district
24 and charter school reports on rates of unexcused absences
25 [~~and~~], habitual truancy and withdrawals and require school

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1 districts and charter schools to certify that the information
2 is being reported consistently."

3 SECTION 5. A new section of the Motor Vehicle Code is
4 enacted to read:

5 "[NEW MATERIAL] AUTHORITY OF DIVISION TO SUSPEND LICENSE
6 OF SCHOOL-AGE PERSON.--

7 A. The division is authorized:

8 (1) upon receipt of a certification of
9 noncompliance with the Compulsory School Attendance Law from
10 a school district, a state-chartered charter school or the
11 public education department, to suspend or deny the granting
12 of an instruction permit, driver's license or provisional
13 license, without a preliminary hearing, of a school-age
14 person until the school-age person reaches the age of
15 eighteen years; and

16 (2) upon receipt of a certification that the
17 school-age person is in compliance with or is no longer
18 subject to the Compulsory School Attendance Law from a school
19 district, a state-chartered charter school or the public
20 education department, to:

21 (a) reinstate a suspended instruction
22 permit, driver's license or provisional license of a school-
23 age person; or

24 (b) grant an instruction permit,
25 driver's license or provisional license to a school-age

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1 person pursuant to the Motor Vehicle Code.

2 B. The division may adopt and promulgate rules to
3 implement the provisions of this section."

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