

# The Chronic Absenteeism Reduction in Every School Act



The Chronic Absenteeism Reduction in Every School Act authorizes funds for schools to develop and implement effective strategies to combat chronic absenteeism. There are a multitude of reasons why students are chronically absent and schools must use a multifaceted approach to provide the appropriate resources and relationship-centric supports for young people. School-based mentoring programs are a critical part of building an understanding of a student's personal and social-emotional development and allows mentors to build connections with students and families, identify appropriate interventions, and work collaboratively with school personnel to determine each student's unique needs.

## Summary

The Chronic Absenteeism Reduction in Every School Act seeks to ensure that educators have the resources they need to help students succeed and regularly attend school. Nationally, more than 8 million students are missing so many days of school that they are academically at risk. Research demonstrates that students who are chronically absent will fall behind in reading proficiency by the end of third grade and by sixth grade chronic absence becomes the leading indicator of whether a student will drop out of high school. At many stages, chronic absenteeism is an early warning indicator of future disconnection or withdrawal from school, and there are appropriate interventions that can be taken to address attendance. The Chronic Absenteeism Reduction in Every School Act implements evidence-based strategies to create relationship-centric schools, allowing them to partner with local health, transportation, and other social service providers to tailor interventions to the needs of students while using real time data collection and analysis tools to track and identify attendance and progress. At its core, it provides schools with evidence-based interventions and resources to identify needs, provide social connection, and coordinate services for these students.

The bill would allow schools to access funding to address interventions for students who miss 10% or more of school days (as determined at any time during a school year) by:

- Implementing real time data collection and analysis tools allowing educators to track and identify attendance issues and monitor if progress is being made. Data can be shared at the individual level (with confidentiality agreements) with students, families, teachers, and principals to encourage immediate interventions, and at the aggregate level with district leadership, policymakers, and community partners to increase accountability.
- Partnering with local health, transportation, and social service providers to target specific interventions for students. This allows for schools to tailor solutions based on why individual or groups of students are absent and connect them to resources like temporary shelters, transportation passes, and health care.
- Implementing quality school-based mentoring programs that connect students who are chronically absent with trained mentors for group and one-on-one mentoring relationships. The mentors facilitate necessary interventions and support regular school attendance. Schools can:
  - Train their own faculty and administrative staff to serve as mentors to students; and/or,



- Partner with community mentoring programs to screen, train, and match volunteer mentors with students who are chronically absent and provide ongoing support to their relationship.

Together both volunteer mentors and trained school personnel can establish goals and evaluation of outcomes for students while coordinating with each other and families.

- Creating cross-age peer mentoring programs for older students to serve as mentors to younger students who are chronically absent and help guide their social and emotional development.
- Providing training to all school personnel on building positive school climates and promoting social-emotional learning, and implementing evidence-based restorative justice strategies aimed at reducing suspensions to keep students in school and learning.

### Key Talking Points

- Students who are chronically absent miss school for a variety of reasons including chronic health conditions, high rates of violence in their communities, watching younger siblings, bullying, inequitable access to transportation, or lack of interest or engagement in education. This requires an approach that tailors interventions to the student while engaging school personnel, families, and social service providers.
- The Chronic Absenteeism Reduction in Every School Act is flexible to school and community needs by allowing local districts to decide what kind of mentoring models they determine to be most impactful for their students. Schools can train their own personnel to become mentors or they can partner with community mentoring programs who can match volunteer mentors with students who are chronically absent.
- Students who meet regularly with their mentors are 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37% less likely to skip a class. A relationship-centric approach to supporting students creates trusting relationships that allows mentors to focus on solutions and opportunities, not just barriers and help students achieve tangible goals.
- Research demonstrates that students who are chronically absent will fall behind in reading proficiency by the end of third grade and by sixth grade chronic absence becomes the leading indicator of whether a student will drop out of high school. Students who are chronically absent are 68% less likely to graduate from high school. Nearly every school district in the nation has students who are chronically absent. Chronic absenteeism is an issue that affects many students in our nation.
- Data collection and analysis tools allow school personnel and mentors to identify attendance issues and track if progress is being made. They can review data and work together to find the appropriate solutions.

### Congressional Co-Sponsors

In August 2019, Representative Tim Ryan (D-OH) and Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA) introduced the Chronic Absenteeism Reduction in Every School Act (H.R. 4220). It has bipartisan support in the House of Representatives.

As of May 2020 there are 31 co-sponsors of the bill (listed here alphabetically): Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN), Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA), Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Rep. Sylvia Garcia (D-TX), Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Rep. Josh Harder (D-CA), Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL), Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT), Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA), Rep. Jim Himes (D-CT), Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Rep. Annie Kuster (D-NH), Rep. Jim Langevin (D-RI), Rep. John Larson (D-CT), Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA), Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL), Rep. Elaine Luria (D-VA), Rep. Gregory

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Meeks (D-NY), Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA), Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI), Rep. Max Rose (D-NY), Rep. Harley Rouda (D-CA), Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL), Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH), Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA), Rep. David Scott (D-GA), Rep. José Serrano (D-NY), Rep. Greg Stanton (D-AZ), Rep. David Trone (D-MD), Rep. Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) and Rep. Frederica Wilson (D-FL).

MENTOR and its partners are working with interested Senate offices for a potential introduction of the companion bill.

### Supporters

MENTOR is joined by partners in supporting The Chronic Absenteeism Reduction in Every School Act, including (alphabetically):

- AASA: The School Superintendents Association
- American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
- American School Counselor Association (ASCA)
- Center for Supportive Schools
- Coalition for Juvenile Justice
- Collaborative for Academic, Social, Emotional Learning (CASEL)
- Committee for Children
- Communities in Schools
- Healthy Schools Campaign
- National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
- The National Education Association (NEA)
- National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

### Questions

Contact Adriane Alicea, Director of Government Relations, [aalicea@mentoring.org](mailto:aalicea@mentoring.org)