



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W., SUITE 102
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004
202.724.8028

ZACHARY PARKER
COUNCILMEMBER, WARD 5

COMMITTEE MEMBER
Facilities and Family Services
Health
Hospital and Health Equity
Housing
Transportation and the Environment

Statement on New Legislation Addressing Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy: The Showing Up for Students Amendment Act of 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 22, 2024

Media Contact: Melissa Littlepage | mlittlepage@dccouncil.gov | 771-333-9834

WASHINGTON, DC — Next week, Councilmember Parker will introduce the **Showing Up for Students Amendment Act of 2024**. This legislation will revamp the District’s approach to truancy and chronic absenteeism and set higher expectations for schools, parents, and District agencies amidst an environment in which alarming rates of chronic truancy and absenteeism have been accepted for too long.

“The bill will shift the District’s approach in four ways,” shared Councilmember Parker. “**First, the bill will seek to establish a culture in which parents and schools are expected to communicate about a student’s absence, while allowing more grace for students’ lived experiences.** Accordingly, the bill changes requirements for reporting absences, while also expanding the set of valid excuses to include specific or presumed threats of violence, the serious illness of a family member, housing displacement, failure of the District to provide legally required transportation, and absences relating to family court proceedings.”

Councilmember Parker continued, “**Second, the bill will modify the process for engagement with families of students who accrue unexcused absences.** Students with 7 or more unexcused absences in a rolling 120-day period will be referred to the Department of Human Services, the agency best placed to link them with services that can address the underlying cause of absenteeism. If DHS’s efforts fail, students under age 13 will then be referred to Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) at 20 unexcused absences, and students over the age of 13 will be referred to the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) at 25 unexcused absences. For any student with more than 20 unexcused absences in a year, the bill will require a summer home visit to explore barriers to attendance and update the student’s individualized education plan.”

“**Third, the bill tasks District education agencies with providing greater analysis, support, and interagency coordination to reduce absenteeism and truancy.** The Office of the State Superintendent for Education (OSSE)’s annual truancy report will be required to include an

analysis of root causes, effective interventions, and additional funding needs; OSSE will be required to establish a tiered system of support for school experiencing high rates of truancy or absenteeism; and OSSE will be required to establish attendance incentive programs for District public school students, student organizations, athletic programs, and out-of-school programs. The Deputy Mayor for Education will be required to conduct a biannual review of chronic absenteeism and truancy trends with local education agency leaders.”

“Fourth, the bill will make changes to the District’s neglect and child supervision standards to ensure that adults who fail children are held accountable, requiring CFSA to demonstrate that District agencies have provided legally required support to a child before determining that the child is in need of supervision. At the same time, the bill makes clear that accumulating 30 unexcused absences in a school year, absent reasonable efforts to ensure or improve a child’s attendance, constitutes neglect.”

Councilmember Parker concluded, **“If we want students to show up to school, we need to show up for them.** By implementing these new requirements, expectations, reporting standards, and streamlined systems of support, we will meaningfully address the needs of District students and their families. This ensures success for all of us. I look forward to working with my colleagues as we tackle truancy and chronic absenteeism.”

###