



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

Ward 5 Councilmember
Chair, Committee on Youth Affairs

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Health
Human Services
Transportation and the Environment

October 4, 2025

Nyasha Smith, Secretary
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Secretary Smith,

Today I am introducing the Improving School Outcomes Amendment Act of 2025. Please find enclosed a signed copy of the legislation. This legislation is co-introduced by Councilmember Pinto.

This bill is intended to boost school attendance throughout the District of Columbia by creating an early warning system for truancy and by consolidating truancy procedures. Truancy studies reveal that early detection and early notification is a key factor for improving school attendance. This bill works to alert caregivers to early truancy issues, so they are empowered to intervene before critical stages of learning loss. The legislation achieves this by reducing the number of absences that a child may accrue before OSSE initiates truancy prevention procedures from 10 days to 5 unexcused absences and adds notification from OAG at 10 unexcused absences before prosecutorial action can be taken at 15 unexcused absences for truant youth.

Furthermore, this legislation seeks to address ongoing issues related to Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) "screen-outs" related to investigations of educational neglect for youth 13 years of age and under. At present, CFSA "screens out" thousands of referrals that it does not consider to qualify as cases of educational neglect under its statutory responsibilities. I agree with the agency's perspective that truancy follow-up is outside of the scope of its purview. Given the lack of follow-up, these reports do not receive any redress to the barriers or challenges causing the absenteeism, which we have found to often include issues stemming from poverty. This bill seeks to offer both a temporary and a permanent solution to this issue by rerouting these referrals from CFSA to the Department of Human Services (DHS) for the time-being, and calling for the establishment of a standardized referral system for all reported cases of chronic absenteeism in the District in the near future.

In summary, this legislation:

- requires schools to notify OSSE after 5 and OAG after 10 and 15 unexcused absences, triggering resource distribution and caretaker alerts. Research is clear that early

intervention is key and that chronic absenteeism is a leading indicator of long-term academic failure and justice-system involvement;

- redirects screened-out referrals from CFSA to DHS when educational neglect is not substantiated so that DHS may contact caretakers and offer support services;
- mandates a joint CFSA-DHS report on educational neglect referrals;
- instructs the Deputy Mayor for Education to develop a unified absenteeism referral system, combining educational neglect and truancy matters under one referral and intervention system by March 31, 2028; and
- shifts from punitive to supportive approaches, aligning with national trends in truancy reform.

I look forward to promoting this legislation with my colleagues to ensure that children across the District receive the education they are entitled to.

Please do not hesitate to contact my Committee Director, Thomas Franco, at tfranco@dccouncil.gov or my Legislative Assistant, Allison Bailey, at abailey@dccouncil.gov with any questions or concerns.

Signed,

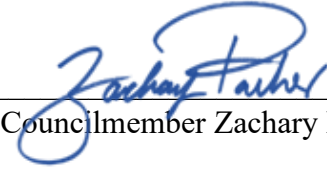


Zachary Parker
Councilmember, Ward 5
Chair, Committee on Youth Affairs
Council of the District of Columbia

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34



Councilmember Brooke Pinto



Councilmember Zachary Parker

A BILL

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To amend An Act To provide for compulsory school attendance, for the taking of a school census in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes to repeal the requirement that educational institutions send a letter and MPD information to the parents of truant youth, to reduce the number of absences after which the educational institution must notify OSSE from 10 to 5 unexcused full school days, to require the educational institution to notify the Office of the Attorney General after 10 unexcused full day absences of a minor student and to require OAG to send a warning letter to the minor student and their caretaker, to transfer screened-out educational neglect referrals from Child and Family Services Agency to the Department of Human Services for follow up and support resources, and to require the Mayor to propose a unified referral system for educational neglect and truancy by March 31, 2028.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this act may be cited as the “Improving School Attendance Outcomes Amendment Act of 2025.”

Sec. 2. An Act To provide for compulsory school attendance, for the taking of a school census in the District of Columbia, and for other purposes, approved February 4, 1925 (43 Stat. 806; D.C. Official Code § 38-208) is amended as follows:

(a) Section 6 of Article II (D.C. Official Code §38-208) is amended by repealing subsection (c).

(b) Section 7(b) of Article II (D.C. Official Code §38-208) is amended to read as follows:

35 “(b) For minor students age 5 and older, within 3 days of the 5th unexcused full school
36 day absence, the educational institution shall notify the Office of the State Superintendent of
37 Education which shall provide the parent with the truancy prevention resource guide created
38 pursuant to § 38-2602(b)(19); provided, that the parent has not received the truancy prevention
39 resource guide before the 5th unexcused absence.”

40 (c) Section 7(c) of Article II (D.C. Official Code §38-208) is amended by adding new
41 subparagraphs (D-F) to read as follows:

42 “(D) For minor students age 5 and older, beginning in the 2026-2027 school year,
43 within 3 days of the 10th unexcused full day absence, the educational institution shall notify the
44 Office of the Attorney General Juvenile Division which shall send the minor student and their
45 caregiver a letter advising that the minor student is at risk of violating the school attendance
46 requirements under District law and may be subject to prosecution upon 15 unexcused full
47 school day absences.

48 “(E) After an educational institution has referred a minor student 5 years of age
49 through 13 years of age to the Child and Family Services Agency, if the Child and Family
50 Services Agency concludes there is not sufficient information to sustain an allegation of
51 educational neglect, the Child and Family Services Agency shall, within 3 days after its
52 conclusion, refer the matter to the Department of Human Services. Beginning with the 2026-2027
53 school year, the Department of Human Services shall, within 3 days after receiving a referral
54 from the Child and Family Services Agency, make an effort to contact the child’s parent or
55 guardian to identify challenges disrupting regular school attendance and may provide appropriate
56 social services for the support of school attendance outcomes.

57 “(F) Not later than August 31, 2027, The Child and Family Services Agency and

Department of Human Services shall co-publish and deliver to the Council a report with the total number of educational neglect reports referred to the Department of Human Services by the Child and Family Services Agency and the outcomes of referrals, including number and type of social services offered and provided and attendance outcomes.”

(d) A new Section 9 is added to read as follows:

“Section 9. Unified Absenteeism Reporting

“Not later than March 31, 2028, the Deputy Mayor for Education shall create a plan for a unified absenteeism referral system, including D.C. Code revisions necessary for unification. This unified absenteeism referral system shall refer all age groups to the Department of Human Services, who, in collaboration with the Child and Family Services Agency, shall provide appropriate social services for the support of school attendance outcomes.”.

Sec. 3. Fiscal impact statement.

The Council adopts the fiscal impact statement in the committee report as the fiscal impact statement required by section 4a of the General Legislative Procedures Act of 1975, approved October 16, 2006 (120 Stat. 2038; D.C. Official Code § 1-301.47a).

Sec. 4. Effective date.

This act shall take effect after approval by the Mayor (or in the event of veto by the Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto), a 30-day period of congressional review as provided in section 602(c)(1) of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act, approved December 24, 1973 (87 Stat. 813; D.C. Official Code § 1-206.02(c)(1)), and publication in the District of Columbia Register.