

**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC OVERSIGHT ROUNDTABLE**

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

**CHAIRMAN PHIL MENDELSON
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
ANNOUNCES A PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE**

on

Student Absenteeism and Discipline

on

Monday, May 13, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.

**Hearing Room 412 (Track B)
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
DC Council Website (www.dccouncil.gov)**

Council Chairman Phil Mendelson announces a public roundtable for government and invited witnesses before the Committee of the Whole on *Student Absenteeism and Discipline*. The hearing will be held at **12:00 p.m. on Monday, May 13, 2024**.

Since students returned to in-person learning en masse in school year 2021-2022, District schools have experienced a sharp increase in student absenteeism. In that school year, 48% of students were chronically absent, meaning they missed at least 10% of school days, and 42% of students were truant, meaning they had 10 or more unexcused absences. In the last few months, four separate legislative measures have been introduced that each aim to ameliorate student absenteeism. This roundtable will provide invited government and expert witnesses an opportunity to discuss legislative solutions to the urgent issue of student absenteeism. This Roundtable is a prelude to a public hearing that will be held at a later date on the four bills.

Bill 25-740, Truancy Reduction for Student Success Act of 2024, introduced by Councilmember R. White, proposes that the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) publish absenteeism data monthly as opposed to annually, which is their current practice.

Bill 25-754, Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy Reduction Amendment Act of 2024, introduced by Councilmember Allen, proposes several key changes. It amends the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula to create a weight for chronically absent students alongside the at-risk weight. School principals, in collaboration with Local School Advisory Teams, would devise public spending plans for these additional funds. The bill requires the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) and the Department of Human Services (DHS), to report on attendance referrals and program outcomes. Further, schools are required to proactively share student attendance records with diversion program operators, and vice versa. The legislation also mandates the Safe

Passage, Safe Blocks program to designate priority areas around schools with high rates of chronic absenteeism. Lastly, it extends the Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement's Leadership Academy program to schools with the highest rates of chronic absenteeism.

Bill 25-758, The Showing Up for Students Amendment Act of 2024, introduced by Councilmember Parker, revises absenteeism data reporting and intervention program requirements. After schools fulfill their mandated responsibilities, the legislation transfers the responsibility for attendance interventions from Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) and Court Social Services (CSS) to DHS. OSSE, rather than school staff, would use already collected attendance data to refer students to DHS after 7 unexcused absences in a rolling 120-day period or 7 absences in a school year. If DHS interventions prove ineffective, they will report students and parents to OAG and CSS or CFSA respectively. For CFSA's purposes the bill also clarifies the definition of educational neglect. The legislation also requires a DHS caseworker or a student support team to provide a home visit to students with 20 or more unexcused absences before the next school year begins. Similar to Bill 25-740 the Bill requires OSSE to publish reports monthly, rather than annually. It also places responsibility on OSSE for publishing analyses of attendance data and to work with Local Education Agencies (LEA) to adopt data-based attendance interventions. OSSE is also tasked with expanding the range of possible excused absences. The Bill also requires the Deputy Mayor for Education to review absentee data and coordinate across government agencies and community organizations to address root causes of absenteeism.

Bill 25-791, Utilizing Partnerships, Local Interventions for Truancy and Safety (UPLIFT) Amendment Act of 2024, introduced by Mayor Bowser, focuses on attendance interventions, student discipline interventions and juvenile crime. Like Bill 25-758, it removes the responsibility for secondary attendance interventions from CFSA and CSS and assigns it to DHS along with adjusting the number days absent required for a referral. OAG and CFSA would retain intervention responsibilities following failed DHS interventions. Additionally, OAG is required to take certain prosecutorial or diversionary actions and report their activities annually. Regarding student discipline interventions, the Bill provides District of Columbia Public Schools the option to suspend students for 11 to 45 days to an Alternative Education Setting. It also requires families of students charged with a dangerous crime to meet and develop a rehabilitation plan with the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services. Regarding juvenile crime, the legislation limits the diversions and relief available to youth who have committed a dangerous crime or crime of violence.

This hearing is limited to invited witnesses and agency representatives. Those who wish to submit testimony for the record may do so by using the Council's Hearing Management System at <https://lims.dccouncil.gov/hearings> or by leaving a voicemail at (202) 430-6948 (up to 3 minutes which will be transcribed). Testimony will be publicly accessible upon Committee review. The record will close at 5:00 pm on Monday, May 27, 2024. If you have additional questions, please contact Bijan Verlin, Legislative Policy Advisor, at (202) 724-4865 or bverlin@dccouncil.gov.