

COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20004

CHAIRMAN PHIL MENDELSON
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
ANNOUNCES A PUBLIC HEARING

on

Student Absenteeism and Discipline

on

Wednesday, June 26, 2024 at 9:00 a.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 hearing before the Committee of the Whole on **Bill 25-740**, “Truancy Reduction for Student Success Act of 2024,” **Bill 25-754**, “Chronic Absenteeism and Truancy Reduction Amendment Act of 2024,” **Bill 25-758**, “The Showing Up for Students Amendment Act of 2024,” and **Bill 25-791**, “Utilizing Partnerships, Local Interventions for Truancy and Safety (UPLIFT) Amendment Act of 2024.” The hearing will be held at **9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 26, 2024. This notice has been revised to reflect a new time for the hearing pursuant to Council Rule 421(d)(1).**

This public hearing is a follow-up to a Roundtable held on May 13th on the same legislative measures for invited expert witnesses. This hearing will provide public and government witnesses an opportunity to discuss legislative solutions to the urgent issue of student absenteeism. Since students returned to in-person learning en masse in the 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. Student absenteeism has only improved slightly this school year. In the last few months, four separate legislative measures have been introduced that each aim to ameliorate student absenteeism.

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

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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.

Those who wish to testify must register using the Council's Hearing Management System at <https://lims.dccouncil.gov/hearings> by **5:00 p.m. on Monday, June 24, 2024**. **Testimony is limited to three minutes**. Witnesses who anticipate needing spoken language interpretation, or require sign language interpretation, are requested to inform the Committee office of the need as soon as possible but no later than five business days before the proceeding by emailing

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cow@dccouncil.gov. We will make every effort to fulfill timely requests, although alternatives may be offered. Requests received in less than five business days may not be fulfilled. Witnesses will receive instructions on how to participate by Zoom prior to the hearing. If you have additional questions, please get in touch with Bijan Verlin, Legislative Policy Advisor, at (202) 724-4865 or bverlin@dccouncil.gov.

Public witnesses will participate in-person or virtually via the Internet on the Zoom Video Conference platform. 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 Wednesday, July 10, 2024.**