

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5118

As Passed Senate, March 12, 1997

Title: An act relating to truancy petitions.

Brief Description: Changing school truancy petition provisions.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Senators McAuliffe, Hargrove, Winsley, Long and Sheldon).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Education: 1/31/97, 2/21/97 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 3/12/97, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5118 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hochstatter, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair; Goings, Johnson, McAuliffe, Rasmussen and Zarelli.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: As part of the 1995 "Becca Bill" (C 312 L 95), the Legislature enacted provisions that require schools to file a petition in juvenile court when a student accumulates at least five, and not more than seven unexcused absences in a month, or ten unexcused absences in a year. If the allegations in the truancy petition are established by a preponderance of the evidence, the court must assume jurisdiction to intervene for the remainder of the school year. The court may order the student to attend school, or be referred to a community truancy board. If the student fails to comply with the court's order, the court can impose a variety of sanctions, including detention, fines, or community service.

Summary of Bill: The length of the court's jurisdiction over a truant student is changed from the end of the school year to a period of time necessary to cause the student to return and remain in school. The list of actions that a court may order for a student subject to a truancy petition is expanded to include requiring the student submit to drug or alcohol testing.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The intent of the truancy provisions is to return truant students to school. If the court's jurisdiction is only through the end of the school year, then those students that

have petitions filed at the end of the school year are not provided help from the system, because the system is not allowed to follow through. This bill strengthens the truancy provisions.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator McAuliffe, prime sponsor; Barbara Mertens, WASA.