
Education Committee

HB 1633

Brief Description: Changing the age of compulsory school attendance.

Sponsors: Representatives Kelley and Maxwell.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lowers the minimum age of compulsory attendance in school from age eight to age seven.
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Hearing Date: 3/22/11

Staff: Barbara McLain (786-7383).

Background:

Washington's compulsory attendance law states that all parents of any child eight years of age and under 18 years of age must cause the child to attend public school. There are exceptions to this law:

1. for children who are enrolled in an approved private school;
2. for children receiving home-based instruction where the parent has filed an intent to provide home-based instruction with the school district as provided by law;
3. if the school district superintendent excuses the child from attendance due to a physical or mental inability to attend, attendance at a residential or correctional facility, or temporary absence; or
4. if the student is at least 16 and has already completed a GED, or is working and the parent agrees that the student should not be required to attend.

School districts must make educational programs available to all students aged five through 21 until they complete a high school diploma. If parents enroll students who are six or seven in public school, those students must attend school on the basis for which they are enrolled, either full-time or part-time. A student who is required to attend public school and has unexcused absences is considered truant. The truancy laws require a series of parent notifications and

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interventions by the district, including requirements for truancy petitions to be filed with the juvenile court alleging that either the parent, the student, or both are violating the compulsory attendance law.

The minimum age of compulsory attendance in Washington has been eight since 1901. The minimum age in other states is as follows:

- Age 8: two states including Washington;
- Age 7: 16 states;
- Age 6: 24 states; and
- Age 5: eight states.

Summary of Bill:

The minimum age of compulsory attendance in public school is lowered from age eight to age seven.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.