

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 1834

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning student excused absences for mental health reasons.

Sponsors: Representatives Callan, Rude, Johnson, J., Davis, Macri, Ramos, Rule, Santos, Senn, Paul, Simmons, Bergquist, Thai, Stonier, Riccelli, Frame and Harris-Talley.

House Committee on Education

Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education

Background:

Student Absence from School: Definition and Excused Absence Categories.

State statute directs the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to adopt rules establishing a standard definition of student absence from school. In adopting the definition, the SPI must review current practices in Washington school districts, definitions used in other states, and national standards or definitions. The SPI must also consult with the Graduation: A Team Effort Partnership Advisory Committee (GATE Committee, formerly known as the Building Bridges Work Group).

By administrative rule, the SPI has established 13 categories for which student absences from school must be excused, including because of illness, health condition, or medical appointment for the student or person for whom the student is legally responsible. The rule also permits school districts to define additional categories for excused absences and permits school principals or designees to determine if an absence meets the state categories and the school district policy for an excused absence.

Graduation: A Team Effort Partnership Advisory Committee.

The GATE Committee includes representatives of agencies, organizations, and others, who work with youth who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of school. The GATE Committee identifies and makes recommendations to the Legislature for the reduction of fiscal, legal, and regulatory barriers that prevent coordination of program resources across agencies at the state and local level; develops and tracks performance measures and

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benchmarks for each partner agency or organization; and identifies research-based and emerging best practices regarding drop-out prevention, intervention, and retrieval programs.

Legislative Youth Advisory Council.

The Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) examines issues of importance to youth, including emotional and physical health, education, and strategies to increase youth participation in government. The Office of the Lieutenant Governor supervises the LYAC and selects its members. Among other things, the LYAC advises the Legislature on proposed and pending legislation and annually reports on its activities to the Legislature.

Summary:

By the beginning of the 2022-23 school year, the rules of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) must categorize a student absence from school for a mental health reason as an excused absence due to illness, health condition, or medical appointment. Prior to filing a public notice of the proposed rules, the SPI must consult with a student advisory group, as described below, in addition to the Graduation: A Team Effort Partnership Advisory Committee.

The SPI must also develop and publish guidelines for public schools to implement the definition of student absence from school. The SPI must consider including guidance for schools to integrate their responses to student excused absences for physical and mental health into their support systems for student well-being.

In developing the guidelines, the SPI must consult with a student advisory group whose members are directly impacted by student absence rules and policies and who represent the diversity of the public school population, including diversity in gender identity, family income, race and ethnicity, and geography, among other characteristics. The student advisory group must also include a member of the Legislative Youth Advisory Council appointed by the Lieutenant Governor.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	96	0
Senate	48	0

Effective: June 9, 2022