

LD 1861 Chronic Absenteeism—

Good Afternoon -Honorable Ed. & Cultural Affairs Members

IN SUPPORT OF THIS BILL 1861 --WITH A HOPE FOR CHANGE

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When Absenteeism becomes Chronic, The Student's Education is at Risk!

There are several known reasons for our youth to “NOT be present at school”. Those reasons include- young early childhood illness, homelessness etc. While for the older kids, it can be their need to stay home to take care of younger siblings- so Parent can work. It can also be the Students insecurities --like not fitting -in with friends or having acceptable clothes, and/or also bullying etc.

This LD 1861 bill appears to be intended to acknowledge, uncover & now address- those many reasons that contribute to chronic absence. Because then all Education is at Risk!

For many Students there is a conundrum (a Challenge) --They might WANT to LEARN there in school BUT when present they feel anxious- **Often it is because they do feel Equal to their Peers (Bandura & Locke; 2007*)**. It soon becomes a feeling transferred on to the school environment. So they prefer to stay home & safe. Their Education & by limiting their Safe zone—their Personal ,Educational and Socially-interactive growth also becomes at Risk!

This Bill LD1861 - will set up the framework but stops there & that is too short!

Let it be known- **PEER Equality** is the driving force for Middle and High School youth to be empowered to enjoy school. It is also the strongest driving force for them NOT TO ATTEND SCHOOL.

So I suggest that this bill LD1861- includes a #4. Programs: (Like suggestions for young childcare & for the Summer). But also those inclusive for those older youth & adolescents. Those Programs for this age--- should acquaint them with creative interest & new avenues. It is this type of “**Action from Education**” that will recover these kids & return them back to school. The paths that bring needed and quick responses --with innovative tactics to boost their self- esteem & support creative opportunities. These type of programs should be of note in this Bill LD 1861.

THE OUTCOME FROM THIS BILL---should not only build the frame but empower in TEXT --the expectation for Recovery. That within this Bills own framework to address Chronic Absenteeism. That this LD 1861 enables these youth to SEE a broadened opportunity is important. One that heightens-- their interest, willingness & desire to learn is a necessity to bring success- when chronic absenteeism prevails.

The Mission of Bill LD 1861 can make CHANGE HAPPEN! DP (Suggestions & Examples below)

LD 1861 & The Rest of the Story to Consider (WS) Includes Removing all Obstacles:

We can uncover the obstacles for these individual Student's who are Chronically Absent. And not stop there –instead we can push harder to enable that – each one Student – to attend school. Therefore, the Actions taken with this Bill must spell out -- **The “WHAT” that causes these youth to feel they have to chronically escape from class AND/OR that “HOW COME” they have to stay home to feel safe.**

Here is Example 1: This student, who was often suspended came to me when I was running a program in that school. When I asked what he needed- he explained he wanted inclusion. When Asked why so many Suspensions- He said he felt safer at home. He said he had to fight at school! He was big and held back in 6th grade; this was to soon become 4 times. But then, we fixed the problem. In this case, An explanation for his fear was easily addressed. **It was directly linked to his Peer Inequality.** Simply said, HE FEARED that his learning difficulty would be exposed to his Peers. So, we fixed it! Just a simple explanation itself, helped him dramatically!

With this **Bill LD 1861 in Work Session**—I suggest you consider how we can no longer tolerate the same old approaches to inform this work & expect success. **Our Kids need more, their Parents need more. Their teachers and class need them there in their own classrooms (neither a threat or feeling threatened) – but instead enjoying their freedom to learn.**

When They Do Feel Threatened: There Are Several Things We Can Do TO Encourage Their Attendance in School! It Is This Action That Will Make a Difference!

TO ENCOURAGING ATTENDANCE -- means we initiate “anxiety-reducing pathways to empower these students’ success.” Although this Legislature does not normally suggest Programs. In this bill, LD 1861 if this text suggesting the Task Force **would add a few lines** of TEXT to discuss also “New Techniques Not Currently In Use”.

Example 2: Coaching: When their difficult or chronically absent Students could use a key word or phrase. This example empowers them with “Safe Tools” to get out of the nightmare they feel they are experiencing right then.”

It might be as simple as their saying “I need strength” to the teacher or even just remarking “out but not too loud” when feeling major discomfort or threat. These words prompt help! —as it also then triggers a teachers’ smile and response in class. “We all do need strength, so lets just all of us stop & take a breath”—(But for this one student or few others it would allow them to pause. ... Then with planning, it might even possibly enable this one to leave & get themselves to a safe zone). Giving this student time to recover and/or get help, right then).

If someone is there in that Safe Zone-- not only to LISTEN but ALSO TO ACT—more kids would come back into schools. That is the first step to fixing these Students who are chronically troubled or absent-

but who DO want to stay in school. The second step is..... for Step II to “Read them a Checklist” with Solutions for them to pick from and then apply! Right then, right there!

Food for Thought & Growth to Make Change Happen!

Sincerely *Deborah Parker DP*

(with CC: For School Empowerment Tools -Executive Dept. Dir. US DOE)