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(Original Signature of Member)

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to allow local educational agencies to use Federal funds for programs and activities that address chronic absenteeism.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. RYAN of Ohio introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to allow local educational agencies to use Federal funds for programs and activities that address chronic absenteeism.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Chronic Absenteeism
5 Reduction Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

1 (1) Students who are chronically absent (mean-
2 ing they miss 10 percent or more of the school year)
3 are more likely to experience hardships later in life
4 and 68 percent less likely than their peers to grad-
5 uate.

6 (2) The Department of Education’s Office of
7 Civil Rights and Data Collection found that over 6.8
8 million students were chronically absent during the
9 2013-2014 school year. This makes up 14 percent of
10 the entire student population.

11 (3) The 19 percent of high school students who
12 are chronically absent are more likely to drop out.
13 This leaves them prone to living in poverty, suffering
14 from diminished health, and being involved in the
15 criminal justice system later in life.

16 (4) The Department of Education found that,
17 “Chronic absenteeism is widespread” and “Research
18 suggests the reasons for chronic absenteeism are as
19 varied as the challenges our students and families
20 face – including poor health, limited transportation,
21 and a lack of safety – which can be particularly
22 acute in disadvantaged communities and areas of
23 poverty.”

24 (5) A report by the Everyone Graduates Center
25 found that chronic absenteeism can stem from a

1 wide range of often overlapping internal and exter-
2 nal factors. External factors include homelessness,
3 family dysfunction, and transportation; while inter-
4 nal factors include health, fear of bullying, concern
5 for safety, and not valuing daily school attendance.
6 Therefore, it is critical to have cross-sector collabo-
7 rations and multifaceted strategies that incorporate
8 parents, public-private partnerships, and community
9 partners.

10 (6) Students of color are disproportionately
11 chronically absent. Latino students are 9 percent
12 more likely to be chronically absent, African Amer-
13 ican students 30 percent more likely, and American
14 Indian and Pacific Islander students are over 50
15 percent more likely according to the Department of
16 Education, Office of Civil Rights Data Collection.

17 (7) Studies have shown that mentors can help
18 reduce chronic absenteeism. Students who regularly
19 meet with mentors are 52 percent less likely than
20 their peers to skip a day of school and 37 percent
21 less likely to skip a class. In one program, previously
22 chronically absent students in 2012-2013 with “Suc-
23 cess Mentors” gained 51,562 additional days of
24 school compared to previously chronically absent stu-
25 dents without mentors at comparison schools; and

1 92,277 additional days compared to comparison
2 school students without mentors during the three
3 year initiative.

4 (8) A report on the impact of one mentoring
5 program found that it reduced school absenteeism by
6 half. In another study, youth showed a gain of more
7 than a week of class attendance.

8 (9) Studies estimate that 9.4 million young peo-
9 ple who are at-risk need a mentor.

10 **SEC. 3. INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS CHRONIC ABSENTEE-**
11 **ISM.**

12 Section 4108(5) of the Elementary and Secondary
13 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 7118(5)) is amended—

14 (1) in subparagraph (H)(iii) by striking “or” at
15 the end;

16 (2) in subparagraph (I), by striking the period
17 at the end and inserting “; or”; and

18 (3) by adding at the end the following:

19 “(J) interventions for students who miss
20 10 percent or more of school days (as deter-
21 mined at any time during a school year), which
22 may include—

23 “(i) implementing data collection sys-
24 tems that assist schools in collecting and
25 tracking attendance data;

1 “(ii) creating data-sharing and con-
2 fidentiality agreements between schools
3 and partner agencies or community organi-
4 zations working with students;

5 “(iii) partnering with local health,
6 transportation, and service providers;

7 “(iv) integrating school personnel for
8 mentoring;

9 “(v) carrying out mentoring programs
10 that—

11 “(I) are structured, managed,
12 and appropriately match students
13 with screened and well-trained adult
14 volunteers for group and one-on-one
15 mentoring relationships;

16 “(II) encourage mentors and stu-
17 dents to meet frequently;

18 “(III) are intended to satisfy a
19 student’s need for involvement with a
20 caring and supportive adult who
21 serves as a positive role model;

22 “(IV) emphasize the importance
23 of regular school attendance; and

24 “(V) provide and facilitate the
25 necessary student support services;

1 “(vi) partnering with community orga-
2 nizations that offer mentoring services that
3 consist of—

4 “(I) screening and training of
5 adult volunteers;

6 “(II) matching children and
7 youth with the appropriate adult vol-
8 unteer mentors;

9 “(III) support and oversight of
10 the mentoring relationship;

11 “(IV) establishing goals and eval-
12 uation of outcomes for mentored chil-
13 dren; and

14 “(V) planned and ongoing coordi-
15 nation between mentors and school
16 personnel to identify individual stu-
17 dent challenges causing chronic absen-
18 teeism in an effort to connect mentees
19 to appropriate school personnel or re-
20 sources such as access to transpor-
21 tation or medical care;

22 “(vii) cross-age peer mentoring pro-
23 grams under which an older youth serves a
24 mentor for a younger student for the pur-
25 pose of guiding and supporting the stu-

1 dent’s academic, social, and emotional de-
2 velopment;

3 “(viii) school reorganization aimed at
4 improving relationships between students
5 and staff, including strategies for recog-
6 nizing and modeling good attendance, such
7 as mentors greeting students each day and
8 promptly contacting a parent or mentor if
9 the student is absent;

10 “(ix) identifying issues that lead to
11 school absences;

12 “(x) meeting with students and par-
13 ents to engage students and improve per-
14 formance;

15 “(xi) arranging for teacher home vis-
16 its to develop relationships among stu-
17 dents, parents and schools;

18 “(xii) connecting students to existing
19 school resources and activities, including
20 school counseling services and existing
21 community-based organizations;

22 “(xiii) using mentors to serve as a
23 bridge between students, parents, and
24 schools;

1 “(xiv) implementing evidence-based
2 restorative justice strategies aimed at re-
3 ducing suspensions in order to keep stu-
4 dents in school; or

5 “(xv) providing personnel training to
6 build positive school climates and promote
7 social-emotional learning.”.