

By Senator McClain

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to student absences; amending s.
3 1003.26, F.S.; requiring a student's primary teacher
4 to report to the principal, or his or her designee, if
5 a student is chronically absent; requiring the State
6 Board of Education to create guidelines relating to
7 student absences; providing an effective date.
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9 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
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11 Section 1. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section
12 1003.26, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (6) is
13 added to that section, to read:

14 1003.26 Enforcement of school attendance.—The Legislature
15 finds that poor academic performance is associated with
16 nonattendance and that school districts must take an active role
17 in promoting and enforcing attendance as a means of improving
18 student performance. It is the policy of the state that each
19 district school superintendent be responsible for enforcing
20 school attendance of all students subject to the compulsory
21 school age in the school district and supporting enforcement of
22 school attendance by local law enforcement agencies. The
23 responsibility includes recommending policies and procedures to
24 the district school board that require public schools to respond
25 in a timely manner to every unexcused absence, and every absence
26 for which the reason is unknown, of students enrolled in the
27 schools. District school board policies shall require the parent
28 of a student to justify each absence of the student, and that
29 justification will be evaluated based on adopted district school

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30 board policies that define excused and unexcused absences. The
31 policies must provide that public schools track excused and
32 unexcused absences and contact the home in the case of an
33 unexcused absence from school, or an absence from school for
34 which the reason is unknown, to prevent the development of
35 patterns of nonattendance. The Legislature finds that early
36 intervention in school attendance is the most effective way of
37 producing good attendance habits that will lead to improved
38 student learning and achievement. Each public school shall
39 implement the following steps to promote and enforce regular
40 school attendance:

41 (1) CONTACT, REFER, AND ENFORCE.—

42 (b)1. If a student has had at least 5 ~~five~~ unexcused
43 absences, or absences for which the reasons are unknown, within
44 a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences, or absences for which
45 the reasons are unknown, within a 90-calendar-day period, the
46 student's primary teacher must ~~shall~~ report to the school
47 principal or his or her designee that the student may be
48 exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance. The principal shall,
49 unless there is clear evidence that the absences are not a
50 pattern of nonattendance, refer the case to the school's child
51 study team to determine whether ~~if~~ early patterns of truancy are
52 developing. If the child study team finds that a pattern of
53 nonattendance is developing, whether the absences are excused or
54 not, a meeting with the parent must be scheduled to identify
55 potential remedies, and the principal must ~~shall~~ notify the
56 district school superintendent and the school district contact
57 for home education programs that the referred student is
58 exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance.

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59 2. If a student is absent for 10 percent of school days
60 within the first 45 days of the school year, regardless of the
61 absences being excused or unexcused, the student's primary
62 teacher must report to the school principal, or his or her
63 designee, that the student is chronically absent.

64 (6) STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION GUIDELINES.—The State Board of
65 Education shall create guidelines for school districts to follow
66 when creating policies relating to student absences. The
67 guidelines must include policies for the determination and
68 accounting of excused and unexcused absences.

69 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.