

119TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. 4872

To help local educational agencies reduce chronic absenteeism and create safe learning environments in public elementary schools and secondary schools, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 23, 2026

Mr. BENNET introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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## A BILL

To help local educational agencies reduce chronic absenteeism and create safe learning environments in public elementary schools and secondary schools, and for other purposes.

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 “Keep Kids in School  
5 Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

1           (1) ESEA TERMS.—The terms “elementary  
2 school”, “local educational agency”, “secondary  
3 school”, and “State educational agency” have the  
4 meanings given those terms in section 8101 of the  
5 Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965  
6 (20 U.S.C. 7801).

7           (2) CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM.—The term  
8 “chronic absenteeism” means students at a public  
9 elementary school or secondary school who are ab-  
10 sent, for any excused or unexcused reason, for 10  
11 percent or more of the days for which the student  
12 is enrolled in a public school during a school year.

13           (3) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
14 the Secretary of Education.

15           (4) STATE.—The term “State” means each of  
16 the 50 States of the United States, the District of  
17 Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Amer-  
18 ican Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern  
19 Mariana Islands, Guam, and the United States Vir-  
20 gin Islands.

21 **SEC. 3. GRANT PROGRAM.**

22           (a) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—

23           (1) IN GENERAL.—From amounts made avail-  
24 able to carry out this section, the Secretary shall  
25 award grants to State educational agencies to enable

1 the State educational agencies to award subgrants to  
2 local educational agencies to provide assistance to  
3 public elementary schools and secondary schools  
4 served by the local educational agencies to reduce  
5 the chronic absenteeism rate at the schools and fos-  
6 ter safe learning environments.

7 (2) PREFERENCE.—In awarding grants to  
8 State educational agencies under paragraph (1), the  
9 Secretary shall give preference to States with high  
10 rates of chronic absenteeism or those serving the  
11 most vulnerable student populations.

12 (b) APPLICATIONS.—

13 (1) STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.—A State  
14 educational agency desiring a grant under this sec-  
15 tion shall submit to the Secretary an application at  
16 such time, in such manner, and containing such in-  
17 formation as the Secretary may require.

18 (2) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.—A local  
19 educational agency desiring a subgrant under this  
20 section shall submit to the State educational agency  
21 in the State in which the local educational agency is  
22 located an application at such time, in such manner,  
23 and containing such information as the State edu-  
24 cational agency may require.

25 (c) USE OF FUNDS.—

1           (1) BY STATES.—A State educational agency  
2       receiving a grant under this section shall use the  
3       grant funds to award subgrants to local educational  
4       agencies in the State.

5           (2) BY LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES.—A  
6       local educational agency receiving a subgrant under  
7       this section shall use subgrant funds to reduce  
8       chronic absenteeism rates and to create safe learning  
9       environments in public elementary schools and sec-  
10      ondary schools served by the local educational agen-  
11      cy. Such activities may include—

12           (A) hiring additional counselors, mental  
13      health professionals, social workers, or family li-  
14      aisons;

15           (B) providing stipends to teachers to per-  
16      form home visits for students who are chron-  
17      ically absent;

18           (C) supporting programming to address  
19      chronic absenteeism and to improve safety in  
20      learning environments;

21           (D) transportation costs, such as buses;

22           (E) research and data collection so schools  
23      and local educational agencies can track absen-  
24      teeism rates, patterns, and root causes through-  
25      out the school year; or

1 (F) other activities or methods that have  
2 been shown to reduce the chronic absenteeism  
3 rate.

4 (d) REPORTS.—Not later than 3 years after the date  
5 a local educational agency receives a subgrant under this  
6 section, the local educational agency shall prepare and  
7 submit to the State educational agency a report regarding  
8 the impact of the subgrant funds and whether each of the  
9 elementary schools or secondary schools supported under  
10 the subgrant reduced their chronic absenteeism rate. The  
11 State educational agency shall submit reports received  
12 from local educational agencies to the Secretary.

13 **SEC. 4. STUDY REGARDING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM AND**  
14 **SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS.**

15 (a) STUDY.—The Comptroller General of the United  
16 States shall conduct a study on chronic absenteeism and  
17 safety in learning environments in public elementary  
18 schools and secondary schools of the United States.

19 (b) CONTENTS OF STUDY.—In carrying out the study  
20 under subsection (a), the Comptroller General shall exam-  
21 ine chronic absenteeism and research the extent to which  
22 evidence-based interventions can reduce chronic absentee-  
23 ism rates and improve student achievement and student  
24 well-being.

1       (c) REPORT.—Not later than 1 year after the date  
2 of enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall  
3 prepare and submit a report regarding the study con-  
4 ducted under subsection (a) and the conclusions and rec-  
5 ommendations generated from the study to the Committee  
6 on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate,  
7 the Committee on Education and Workforce of the House  
8 of Representatives, and the Secretary.

