



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

BILL: Senate Bill 668 **DATE:** March 31, 2022

SUBJECT: Juveniles - Truancy Reduction Pilot Program - Expansion **COMMITTEE:** Judiciary

POSITION: Support

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EXPLANATION:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) supports **Senate Bill 668 - Juveniles - Truancy Reduction Pilot Program - Expansion**. This bill formally establishes the Truancy Reduction Pilot Program as a tool for administrative judges to use in juvenile courts across the State in an effort to focus on positive and productive interventions for juveniles in truancy cases.

MSDE is committed to aiding this attempt in any way possible to work towards the best outcomes for all students in Maryland. The State Superintendent is passionate about this issue and is very supportive of identifying novel methods to shift the conversation surrounding truancy away from punitive measures to specifically tailored supports and interventions.

A number of state and local systems throughout the United States have invested significantly and developed robust policies seeking to address truancy with a focus on prevention and intervention. For example, San Antonio adopted policies that connect students who frequently miss school (and their families) with critical services to address the underlying recurring issues. This led to truancy case filings in San Antonio’s largest school district being reduced by 66% over the course of two school years.¹

Others have taken steps to increase parental involvement and have established community truancy boards to holistically address each student’s case in a multi-pronged approach that includes community and school leaders and court officials to direct students and families towards successful school re-engagement.² These programs have been demonstrated to have positive impacts on student outcomes such as graduation rates.³

¹ <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/6/2/how-san-antonio-is-solving-the-truancy-problem.html>

² <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/states-are-looking-beyond-juvenile-justice-system-address-school-truancy>

³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740914001935>

SB 668 is a step in the right direction to addressing truancy in a way that directs students away from the criminal justice system and towards re-engagement in school.

We respectfully request that you consider this information as you deliberate **SB 668**. Please contact Ary Amerikaner, at 410-767-0090, or ary.amerikaner@maryland.gov, for any additional information.