

Government of the District of Columbia
Office of the Chief Financial Officer



Natwar M. Gandhi
Chief Financial Officer

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia

FROM: Natwar M. Gandhi
Chief Financial Officer 

DATE: March 26, 2013

SUBJECT: Fiscal Impact Statement - "Attendance Accountability Amendment Act of 2013"

REFERENCE: Draft Resolution shared with the Office of Revenue Analysis on March 18, 2013

Conclusion

Funds are not sufficient in the FY 2013 through FY 2016 budget and financial plan to implement the bill.

The costs of the bill can be absorbed in FY 2013 and FY 2014. The bill will increase expenditures at the Office of Attorney General by \$239,504 in FY 2015 and FY 2016, combined.

Background

The bill amends current law¹ to require specific notifications and actions by several District agencies with regard to students with certain levels of unexcused school absences.

First, the bill delineates several notification requirements. Educational institutions² must notify the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) within two days of when a student accumulates ten unexcused absences in a given school year. If the student is between 5 and 13 years old, the educational institution must also refer the student to the Child and Family Services Agency within two days. Beginning in school year 2013-2014, if a student over 14 years of age has 15 unexcused absences in a given school year, the educational institution must refer the student, within two days, to the Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court, and to the Office of the Attorney General Juvenile Section (OAG).

¹ D.C. Official Code § 38-201 *et seq.*

² The bill defines an educational institution as any person or entity that provides elementary or secondary educational programs or services to a school-aged child within normal school hours.

Second, upon notification by an educational institution, OAG and MPD must send the parent of the student a letter notifying the parent that he or she may be subject to prosecution for violation of school attendance requirements. OAG must send a letter to the parent within 3 days, while there is no specific timeframe indicated for MPD. OSSE, upon notification of a truant student by an educational institution, must provide a copy of its truancy prevention resource guide to the parent.

Lastly, the bill mandates the development of two reports. First, beginning in 2014, OAG must provide an annual status report on truancy by July 15 of each year. The report must include the number of referrals it received from each educational institution, cases that have been filed and their outcomes, and students who were enrolled in diversion programs.³ Second, OSSE must provide a one-time report within 180 days of the bill's effective date with recommendations on how to eliminate suspensions and expulsions.

Financial Plan Impact

Funds are not sufficient in the FY 2013 through FY 2016 budget and financial plan to implement the bill.

The bill will increase workload for staff at MPD, DCPS, OAG and OSSE to manage what could be several thousand student referrals per year, as well as printing and mailing costs associated with sending letters and handbooks to parents. Most of the agencies have indicated they can absorb this increased workload within their current resources. However, OAG expects that the bill will result in an increase in referrals for prosecution from the Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court in the future, and will require an additional FTE to meet that demand starting FY 2015.

Estimated Cost of Attendance Accountability Amendment Act of 2013 (Committee Print Draft) FY 2013 - FY 2016					
	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	TOTAL
1 FTE Attorney for OAG (Grade 13, Step 1)	\$0	\$0	\$117,982	\$121,522	\$239,504
Total	\$0	\$0	\$117,982	\$121,522	\$239,504

³ Diversion programs attempt to redirect youthful offenders away from the criminal justice system while still holding them accountable for their actions.