

HB 2191 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Sen. Wagner

Senate Committee On Education

Action Date: 05/13/19

Action: Do pass with amendments. (Printed A-Eng.)

Vote: 3-0-0-2

Yeas: 3 - Gelser, Hass, Wagner

Abs: 2 - Heard, Thomsen

Fiscal: No fiscal impact

Revenue: No revenue impact

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Meeting Dates: 4/22, 5/13

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Includes mental or behavioral health of the pupil within the term "sickness of pupil" for purposes of excused school absences. Prohibits student grading policies that reduce grades or deny credit based on excused absences provided by ORS 339.065. First applies to 2019-2020 school year. Declares emergency, effective July 1, 2019.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Stigma associated with mental illness
- Mental and physical health parity
- Lack of consistency among school districts of what is included in "sickness" of the student
- Sports participation and excused absences
- Misuse of excused absences
- School pressures and stress
- Suicide rate among Oregon's youth
- Access to mental health services
- Ability to make up tests and homework
- Consequences for unexcused absences
- Students who refuse to go to school
- Section 504 plans
- Social and emotional supports in schools
- Joint Committee on Student Success
- Need to track excused and unexcused absences

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Includes mental or behavioral health of the pupil within the term "sickness of pupil" for purposes of excused absences. Removes "the mental or behavioral health of the pupil" as a standalone reason.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon law requires enrolled students to regularly attend their public school. Irregular attendance is considered as eight unexcused, one-half day absences in any four-week school period. Oregon law permits a principal or teacher to excuse an absence for sickness of the student, sickness of a family member, emergency, or other reasons if advanced arrangements are made. Some schools do not consider mental illness as a "sickness of the student" for purposes of excused absences. House Bill 2191 A adds mental or behavioral health issues to the list of reasons for excused absences.