



Representative Hoa Nguyen
Oregon House District 48

HB 3199 - Addressing Chronic Absenteeism

2/26 House Committee on Education

Thank you, Chair Neron, Vice-Chairs Dobson & McIntire, and members of the committee.

For the record I am Sarah Arbuckle, Chief of Staff for State Representative Hoa Nguyen from District 48. Rep Nguyen is not able to attend this hearing today, however I am honored to share her written testimony for HB 3199—I will read Rep Nguyen's testimony into the record now.

I am State Representative Hoa Nguyen, for House District 48, which includes outer Southeast Portland and North Clackamas County.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of HB 3199 to address chronic absenteeism in Oregon. [The interim work group](#) with Senator Weber revealed gaps in the current work around Chronic absenteeism, and identified multiple opportunities for improvement.

Chronic Absenteeism is a silent epidemic with profound consequences for our students and communities. Despite its subtlety, its impact is far-reaching and demands our immediate attention. Why is chronic absenteeism such a critical issue? What makes it so detrimental to our educational goals and the well-being of our youth? These questions demand the urgency of understanding this complex issue and its implications for student success.

It is important to note that the term chronic absenteeism coined by Hedy Chang Director of Attendance Works, has transitioned from truancy in the last decade. She states that it's not enough to look at just unexcused absences and we must look at all reasons for absences. Anytime a student misses school, it impacts their learning and classroom community.

Within my observations in the last decade, chronic absenteeism has been highest amongst the transition grades, KG, Ninth grade, and Senior.

It is a time of transition, adjustment, and new challenges. I have worked within programs such as Kindergarten Readiness and 9th Grade Counts, which are essential as they provide vital support during this pivotal period.

I'd like to highlight a couple of the policies the Oregon Legislature has passed in the 2023 session that have components that address chronic absenteeism.

- HB 3144 The Native Hawaiian Student Success Act, which addresses the high chronic absentee rates among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students
- HB 3014 The Bike Bus Bill, in which we identified equitable access to transportation as one of the biggest barriers to absenteeism, particularly in rural areas.

It is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of our investments in this area. Before we look at increasing funding, we must assess how effectively our current investments are being utilized such as in the initiatives like the Everyday Matters Grant and High School Success Grant.

We learned Chronic Absenteeism is more than just a matter of students missing school—it often indicates underlying challenges in a child's life, including poverty, food insecurity, housing instability, and trauma.

Research from Attendance Works and other national organizations shows a clear link between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and chronic absenteeism. As a non-profit initiative, Attendance Works collaborates with schools, districts, states, communities and organizations to ensure that everyone recognizes that chronic absence is a serious issue that can be addressed using a positive, problem-solving approach grounded in an understanding of educational inequities. ACEs—such as parental incarceration, domestic violence, or neglect—significantly increase the likelihood that a student will miss school. In fact, students who have experienced three or more ACEs are more than twice as likely to be chronically absent as their peers. Chronic absenteeism, in turn, leads to lower academic achievement, decreased high school graduation rates, and increased involvement with the juvenile justice system.

In Oregon, the urgency of this issue cannot be overstated. Our state's chronic absenteeism rates exceed the national average of 26%, with some of our largest districts reporting rates between 33-48%. Addressing chronic absenteeism is not just about attendance—it's about students' well-being, educational equity, and long-term success. The bills before you today combine the previously independent concepts to represent a comprehensive and strategic approach to tackling this issue through data-driven policy, increased family engagement, and targeted funding.

From 10,000 feet up - we are proposing:

- Grant funding for a Parent Notification System

- Asking districts and ODE to report Quarterly Data publicly
- Standardizing Common Attendance Codes for simpler data analysis and integration
- Attendance Study on the Every Day Matters Program and other Attendance Initiatives
- Attendance Advisory Committee with a myriad of stakeholders to determine best practices and create a formal communication between districts and ODHS

Parent Notification and Early Warning Systems

Family engagement is critical to improving attendance. This section strengthens district-level interventions by:

- Providing grants for both parent notification and early warning systems, ensuring timely communication with families.
- Directing the State Board of Education to establish rules for vendor selection and grant fund allocation.
- Requires districts to implement these systems before using grant funds for other purposes.
- Adjusting Average Daily Membership (ADM) calculations annually to reflect attendance needs.
- Setting a funding floor for small districts, ensuring equitable access to resources.

Data Transparency and Quarterly Reporting

Timely and accurate data is essential for effective policy. This section ensures:

- Quarterly updates, providing real-time insights into absenteeism trends.
- Inclusion of students with disabilities, ensuring equity in tracking and intervention efforts.
- This bill does not ask for new data collection requirements, but rather leverages information already gathered by ODE.

Standardized Attendance Codes for Consistency

To address inconsistencies in how districts record absenteeism, this section:

- Mandates a statewide report, identifying patterns and discrepancies in attendance data.
- Requires consideration of district size and geographic location, ensuring equitable solutions.

- Requires a report summarizing best practices and recommendations for changes in administrative rules, legislation, and identifies any funding needed for implementation.

Every Day Matters Initiative and General Attendance Study

Through the workgroup, we discovered that there was more research that needed to be done. This section has been refined from a broad study to a focused evaluation of chronic absenteeism using currently collected data. Key changes since it was introduced include:

- Clarifying the scope to ensure a targeted assessment of attendance-related interventions.
- Utilizing existing ODE data, reducing additional reporting burdens for school districts.
- Requiring a review of funding impacts, allowing Oregon to better understand the effectiveness of current investments.

Attendance Advisory Committee

To ensure targeted attention to chronic absenteeism, this section creates an Attendance Advisory Committee that will:

- Include 15 representatives from a myriad of levels in education
- Includes community partner organizations who support student groups with historic academic disparities.
- Establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to define collaboration between stakeholders coach programming, educator professional development on best practices, and other approaches.
- Requires regular reports from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to track progress.
- The bill set clear timelines, including committee convening and sunset dates.

Together, this bill takes a comprehensive, research-based approach to addressing chronic absenteeism. They recognize that attendance is not just about getting students to school—it's about addressing the root causes of absenteeism, improving family engagement, and ensuring educational equity. By supporting this legislative package, Oregon can make a meaningful, lasting impact on student success.

I urge your support for HB 3199 to strengthen our state's response to chronic absenteeism. Thank you for your time and consideration.