

HB 2191 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Education

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Meeting Dates: 4/22, 5/13

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Expands reasons for excused absences to include mental or behavior health of a student. 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:

-1 Includes mental or behavior health of the pupil within the term "sickness of pupil" for purposes of excused absences. Removes "the mental or behavior health of the pupil" as a separate reason for excused absences.

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. It is reported that some schools do not consider mental illness as a "sickness of the student" for purposes of excused absences. House Bill 2191 adds mental or behavioral health issues to the list of reasons for excused absences.