

April 23, 2026

Re: Proposed revisions to H.930

Dear Chair and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

On behalf of the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA), Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA), and Vermont Principals' Association, we appreciate the Committee's work on H.930 and its focus on addressing chronic absenteeism. Per previous discussion with you, we provide the following suggested revisions to the current bill for your consideration.

Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE INTENT

It is the intent of the General Assembly that student attendance policies in Vermont schools prioritize early identification, supportive intervention, and meaningful family engagement in order to promote consistent school attendance and student success.

The General Assembly finds that chronic absenteeism is primarily an issue that should be addressed through preventative, restorative, and assistance-based measures designed to identify barriers to attendance and reconnect students with school. Schools should respond to chronic absenteeism through written attendance support plans, outreach to families, and appropriate academic, behavioral, and community-based supports.

The General Assembly further finds that truancy is distinct from chronic absenteeism and constitutes a student's failure to comply with compulsory attendance requirements under Vermont law. Truancy should serve as a legal enforcement mechanism only after reasonable school-based interventions have been attempted and have not resulted in improved attendance. Truancy proceedings should be reserved for circumstances in which school-based interventions have not been successful and formal legal enforcement is necessary to ensure compliance with compulsory attendance laws.

We recommend that legislative intent language be included to set the expectations of this statute as well as distinguish chronic absenteeism from truancy.

§ 1121

(6) "Unexcused absence" means any student absence where the parent or guardian fails to provide justification for the absence if requested by the superintendent or the head of school for an approved independent school.

We recommend revising this definition to remove the current mention of categories which we have recommended removing from the bill.

§ 1123 SCHOOL ABSENCE MAY BE EXCUSED

The superintendent of a public school or designee or the head of school of an approved independent school or designee may excuse a student's absence for all or part of the school day based on guidance established and published by the Agency of Education, in consultation with the Vermont School Boards Association, Vermont Superintendents Association, the Vermont Principals' Association, the Vermont Independent Schools Association, and the Vermont School Counselor Association.

We recommend removing the list of categories from statute and providing superintendents or heads of school to determine when absences are excused based on guidance from AOE.

§ 1124(a)

The Agency of Education, in consultation with the Vermont School Boards Association, Vermont Superintendents Association, the Vermont Principals' Association, the Vermont Independent Schools Association, and the Vermont School Counselor Association, shall develop and review at least every three years a model policy on the prevention of chronic absenteeism and truancy, which shall include specific provisions for how to address the absence of a child with a disability, as that term is defined in subdivision 2942(1) of this title, in accordance with applicable State and federal law, and which shall include guidance that emphasizes the importance of tailored responses to all students struggling with safety and emotional issues and shall emphasize emotional, academic, and social support to facilitate a successful reintegration for returning students.

We recommend that the second half of § 1124(a) be removed. Information concerning the creation of a model policy is set out later in Sec. 3.

1127(a)

The truant officer, upon receiving the notice and truancy reporting protocol provided in section 1126 of this title, shall inquire into the cause of the nonattendance of the child. If the truant officer finds that the superintendent or head of school for an approved independent school has not excused the child's absences under section 1123 of this chapter, the truant officer shall give written notice to the parent or guardian that the parent or guardian must comply with the obligations of section 1122 of this chapter.

This change in the first half of the second sentence has been made to align with the removal of categories of excused absences.

1127(b) [new last sentence] The truant office shall also request a report from the Department of Children and Families' regarding the Centralized Intake and Emergency Services notification pursuant to section 1126 of this chapter.

We suggest the addition of this new final sentence in this section in order to highlight the need for a truancy office to ensure DCF has taken action with regard to the previously reported incident.

Sec. 3 (a) *We suggest deleting Sec. 3(a).*

Sec. 5

On or before December 1, 2026, the Agency of Education shall reinstate its pre-2023 home study program regulations including a required submission of annual assessment records upon re-enrollment in a home study program; restoration of limited post-enrollment hearing authority for the Secretary when credible concerns arise; clearly identified statutory triggers for State oversight; required annual reporting to the General Assembly on home study enrollment trends, compliance rates, and use of oversight tools; and, granting limited pre-enrollment investigative authority to the Secretary if truancy or DCF intake patterns are evident.

We request that AOE reinstate previous regulations rather than provide a report containing recommendations regarding possible regulations. Further background on this issue can be in the attached February 10, 2026 letter from VSA for further discussion. See also 16 VSA 166b prior to 2023.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued leadership on student attendance and engagement. We would welcome the opportunity to support the Committee with additional information as needed.

Sincerely,

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