

1 Truancy Pilot Study Project Act.”

2 (b) The Legislature makes the following findings:

3 (1) West Virginia has a dire need to implement a comprehensive
4 approach to addressing the high school truancy and dropout rates,
5 and to develop policies and strategies that successfully assist
6 at-risk students to stay in school, earn a high school diploma, and
7 ultimately become productively contributing members of society;

8 (2) The current demands for a highly skilled workforce require
9 a high school diploma at the very minimum;

10 (3) The state has several dynamic programs that are capable of
11 actively engaging students in learning, providing students with a
12 sense of relevancy in academics, and motivating students to succeed
13 in school and ultimately earn a high school diploma;

14 (4) Dealing with the compulsory school attendance age and high
15 truancy rates may help to increase the graduation rate and decrease
16 the drop-out rate;

17 (5) Absenteeism is proven to be the highest predictor of
18 course failure. Truant students face low self-confidence in their
19 ability to succeed in school because their absences cause them to
20 fall behind their classmates, and the students find dropping out
21 easier than catching up. Students who are chronically truant from
22 elementary school onward, miss school more and more each year,
23 eventually dropping out of high school;

24 (6) Dropping out of school has a profound negative impact on

1 an individual's future, resulting in limited job choices,
2 substantially lower wages and less earned over a lifetime than high
3 school graduates, and a greater likelihood of depending on public
4 assistance and engaging in criminal activity;

5 (c) The Legislature declares as follows:

6 (1) The purpose of this legislation is to establish a
7 framework for addressing high dropout and truancy rates in the
8 various counties in the state;

9 (2) The State Superintendent of Schools shall establish
10 standards and criteria to allow the five or six counties with the
11 highest truancy and dropout rates to implement a pilot plan to
12 reduce truancy by allowing Saturday attendance or during the summer
13 if a student misses more than five permitted absences, which
14 standards and criteria shall include a plan to pay for the cost of
15 Saturday or summer attendance for make up days;

16 (3) Any county school board in the top ten percent of the
17 state for the highest dropout rate may apply for this program. If
18 for any reason the first five or six counties do not choose to
19 participate in this program, then the next county with the highest
20 dropout rate may apply and so forth until ten percent of the
21 state's counties are represented in this pilot program.

22 (d) The pilot program shall commence no later than September
23 1, 2011 and continue until July 1, 2017, unless sooner terminated
24 by the Legislature.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create a pilot program to allow the five or six counties with the highest dropout rates to implement a program to help reduce truancy; and to authorize Saturday or Summer make up days.

This section is new; therefore, it has been completely underscored.