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## Oregon House Tackles Chronic Absenteeism in Schools

*HB 4002 requires statewide plan; sets up pilot program*

The Oregon House today took bold steps to address chronic absenteeism in K-12 schools, voting 54-4 to pass [House Bill 4002](#).

Last year, 1 in 6 students in Oregon was chronically absent from school, meaning they missed more than 10 percent of their school year. Research has shown that students who are chronically absent—particularly in the early years of their primary education—are far more likely to drop out of high school and fail to earn a high school diploma.

“Currently, Oregon lacks a statewide plan to address the growing incidents of chronic absenteeism,” says Rep. Joe Gallegos (D-Hillsboro). “However, the good news is that there are already a number of schools and school districts statewide that have implemented practices and programs that are working. House Bill 4002 will take that success statewide.”

The bill combines two important concepts: A statewide plan developed by the Oregon Department of Education and the Chief Education Office that will address ways to decrease incidents of chronic absenteeism, and a three-year pilot project to develop a model that addresses the role that trauma plays in absenteeism.

“As a former teacher, I can tell you that students who don’t have their basic health needs met do not have the same opportunity to succeed as their peers do,” says Rep. Margaret Doherty (D-Tigard). “Students who are exposed to abuse, neglect, alcohol and drug addiction, or even divorce and other traumatic experiences during their childhood understandably have trouble focusing on their academics.”

The statewide plan will require findings be delivered to the legislature by December 1, 2016. The report will include:

- The process for publicly releasing annual information relating to chronic absence rates.
- Identifying best practices and guidance pathways for all districts and schools to use to track, monitor, and address chronic absence and improve attendance.
- Developing a process for identifying schools in need of additional supports.

- And configuring what kind of “technical assistance” the Oregon Department of Education and Chief Education Office will provide to schools identified as in need of support.

The trauma-model pilot project will include education, health services, and intervention strategies in communities with high levels of need. This approach will help provide comprehensive care for those students affected by trauma by partnering schools with Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs), non-profits, parents, the justice system, and others.

House Bill 4002 will now head to the Senate.

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