For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF THE ARKANSAS CODE CONCERNING PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT EXCESSIVE ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF THE ARKANSAS CODE CONCERNING PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT EXCESSIVE ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-18-209 is amended to read as follows:

6-18-209. Adoption of student attendance policies — Effect of excessive unexcused absences.

(a) The board of directors of each school district in this state shall adopt student attendance policies.

(b) Each school district, as a part of its six-year educational plan, shall develop strategies for promoting maximum student attendance, including, but not limited to, the use of alternative classrooms and in-school suspensions in lieu of suspension from school.

(c) A student attendance policy may include excessive unexcused absences as a mandatory basis for denial of promotion or graduation.

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-18-220(a)(4), concerning additional absences granted for participation in FFA, FHA, and 4-H programs, is amended to read as follows:
(4) One method of encouraging participation in such programs is to grant additional excused absences to students who participate in officially sanctioned activities of those organizations.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-18-220(c), concerning additional absences granted for participation in FFA, FHA, and 4-H programs, is amended to read as follows:

(c) Any school district that grants additional excused absences of FFA member students who attend officially sanctioned FFA activities shall afford equal treatment to FHA and 4-H member students who attend the same or similar officially sanctioned activities.

SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-18-222(a)(4)(D)(i), concerning the revocation of driving privilege for a student with excessive absences, is amended to read as follows:

(D)(i) Before a student accumulates the maximum number of unexcused absences allowed in a school district’s student attendance policy, the student or the student’s parent, guardian, or person in loco parentis may petition the school administration or school district administration for special arrangements to address the student’s unexcused absences.

SECTION 5. Arkansas Code § 7-4-116(c)(1)(A), concerning the election poll workers program for high school students, is amended to read as follows:

(A) Be granted an additional excused absence from school while working as an election page;

SECTION 6. Arkansas Code § 7-4-116(d)(1)(D), concerning the election poll workers program for high school students, is amended to read as follows:

(D) Be granted an additional excused absence from school while working as an election official.

SECTION 7. The catchline of Arkansas Code § 6-18-222 is amended to read as follows:

6-18-222. Penalty for excessive unexcused absences – Revocation of driving privilege.
SECTION 8. Arkansas Code § 6-18-222(a)(1), concerning excessive
absences from school, is amended to read as follows:
(a)(1)(A)(i) The board of directors of each school district in this
state shall adopt a student attendance policy, as provided for in § 6-18-209,
which shall include a certain number of excessive unexcused absences that may
be used as a basis for denial of course credit, promotion, or graduation.
(ii) However, excessive unexcused absences shall not
be a basis for expulsion or dismissal of a student.
(B) The legislative intent is that a student having
excessive unexcused absences because of illness, accident, or other
unavoidable reasons should be given assistance in obtaining credit for the
courses.

absences from school, is amended to read as follows:
(4)(A)(i) A student’s parent, guardian, or person in loco
parentis and the community truancy board, if the community truancy board has
been created, shall be notified when the student has accumulated excessive
unexcused absences equal to one-half (½) the total number of absences
permitted per semester under the school district’s or the State Board of
Career Education’s student attendance policy.

SECTION 10. Arkansas Code § 6-18-222(a)(5)(A), concerning excessive
absences from school, is amended to read as follows:
(5)(A) When a student exceeds the number of excessive unexcused
absences provided for in the district’s or the State Board of Career
Education’s student attendance policy, or when a student has violated the
conditions of an agreement granting special arrangements under subdivision
(a)(4)(D) of this section, the school district or the adult education program
shall notify the prosecuting authority and the community truancy board, if a
community truancy board has been created, and the student’s parent, guardian,
or person in loco parentis shall be subject to a civil penalty through a
family in need of services action in circuit court, as authorized under
subdivision (a)(6)(A) of this section, but not to exceed five hundred dollars
($500) plus costs of court and any reasonable fees assessed by the court.