

**MEMORANDUM**

June 29, 2010

**TO:** Education Committee  
Public Safety Committee

**FROM:** Elaine Bonner-Tompkins, Senior Legislative Analyst *EBT*  
Leslie Rubin, Legislative Analyst *LR*  
Office of Legislative Oversight

**SUBJECT: Follow-up on OLO Truancy Report**

On July 1, 2010, the Education and Public Safety Committees will hold a joint worksession to follow up on OLO Report 2010-7, *Truancy in Montgomery County*. Council Vice President Valerie Ervin requested this report to improve the Council's understanding of truancy locally and County agency efforts to address truancy. The report was released by the Council on March 2, 2010; the Education and Public Safety Committees held a worksession on the report on March 18<sup>th</sup>.

This worksession's purpose is to clarify next steps for Council, local, and state action to reduce truancy and increase student performance and engagement, particularly among struggling learners. State Senator Rich Madeleno is scheduled to attend this worksession as well as representatives from the following agencies:

Agency	Representative(s)
Montgomery County Public Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Erick Lang, Office of Curriculum and Instruction</li><li>• Chrisandra Richardson, Office of Special Education and Student Services</li><li>• Frank Stetson, Office of School Performance</li><li>• Steve Neff, Department of Student Services</li><li>• Marshall Spatz, Department of Management, Budget, and Planning</li><li>• Stephanie Williams, Department of Policy, Records, and Reporting</li></ul>
Montgomery County Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sheila Dennis, Child Welfare Services, DHHS</li><li>• Corporal Gary Turner, Family Crimes Division, MCPD</li></ul>
State's Attorney's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• John McCarthy, State's Attorney</li></ul>

Committee members should bring their copy of OLO Report 2010-7 to the worksession; for background, the packet from the March 18<sup>th</sup> worksession is attached.

## A. Overview

The OLO Truancy Report, like several prior reports,<sup>1</sup> documents the difficulties that MCPS continues to face in its efforts to ensure that all student subgroups reach grade level benchmarks. Data reviewed by OLO suggests that black, Latino, and low-income students, as well as students in ESOL and special education classes are more likely to be habitually truant and to drop out of school. OLO's review also evidenced three additional findings:

- Incomplete data on truancy due to the exclusion of highly mobile students from official data counts locally and across the state
- Limited interagency collaboration to intervene early and address truancy and other risk factors for poor academic performance
- The inability of law enforcement to pick up students for truancy under current state law

As County-funded agencies grapple with these issues and consider improved strategies for tracking and reducing truancy, they and the County Council should also keep in mind that MCPS must soon begin to apply more stringent state requirements for calculating its graduation rates.

Historically, MCPS and all Maryland school systems have used the "leaver rate" to calculate graduation rates. The leaver rate measure includes students who take more than four years to graduate. By 2012, MCPS will have to use the "cohort model" approach to track graduation rates that describes the percent of students who graduate on-time (within four years). Using the leaver rate, MCPS' graduation rate was 90 percent in 2007. Using the cohort model, MCPS' graduation rate would have been 82 percent.

## B. Issues for Discussion

The joint worksession provides an opportunity for the Education and Public Safety Committees to discuss with representatives from MCPS, the Executive Branch, and the State's Attorney Office on-going efforts to address truancy and future opportunities to improve County efforts to reduce truancy.

The on-going and recent efforts by MCPS and other County-funded agencies that should be updated for the Committees during worksession include:

- Recent changes in MCPS' loss-of-credit policy
- Trends in school suspensions and academic ineligibility
- Other dropout prevention and truancy reduction efforts (e.g., Truancy Court Program)
- Implications of new graduation rate formula for school programming
- Proposed reforms to the Edison High School of Technology and Career and Technology Education (©8)
- Trends in juvenile crime rates
- Efforts to mitigate the impact of reduced FY11 funding for Educational Facilities Officers on student engagement and truancy

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<sup>1</sup> OLO Report 2008-2, *Defining and Describing MCPS' Progress in Closing the Achievement Gap*; OLO Report 2009-4, *Cost and Performance of MCPS' High School Consortia*; and OLO Report 2009-10, *MCPS' Career and Life Readiness Programs*.

Follow-up opportunities for enhancing the County’s response to truancy that may merit further consideration, discussion during the worksession, and potential action include:

- Improving truancy data collection and reporting
- Expanding interagency collaboration to target truancy
- Seeking an increase in the age of compulsory school attendance
- Enacting County laws to permit law enforcement to pick up truant students
- Expanding Career and Technology Education opportunities for students at risk of habitual truancy and dropping out of school
- Developing other incentives for students to attend school regularly

**C. Next Steps**

Following the July 1<sup>st</sup> worksession, OLO staff will work the Education and Public Safety Committee chairs to communicate expectations for follow-up with agency representatives on agreed upon next steps. OLO staff will also schedule a follow-up worksession at the end of the calendar year for agency representatives to update the Committees on their respective and collective efforts.

**List of Attachments**

<b>Attachment</b>	<b>Found at ©</b>
March 18, 2010 ED/PS Committee Worksession Packet (w/o attachments)	©1
Washington Examiner – “Future of MontCo vocational high school uncertain”, 6-20-10	©8
Washington Times – “D.C. Council set to tighten school-truancy standards”, 6-24-10	©9

MEMORANDUM

March 16, 2010

TO: Education Committee  
Public Safety Committee

FROM: Elaine Bonner-Tompkins, Senior Legislative Analyst  
Leslie Rubin, Legislative Analyst  
Office of Legislative Oversight

SUBJECT: **OLO Report 2010-7: Truancy in Montgomery County**

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, the Education and Public Safety Committees will hold a joint worksession on OLO Report 2010-7, which was released by the Council on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Council Vice President Valerie Ervin requested this study to understand the magnitude of truancy within the County, how agencies are working together to reduce truancy, and best practices for preventing and reducing truancy.

Overall, OLO found that relatively few County students are habitually truant (less than one percent). OLO also found that current County practices partially align with best practices for reducing truancy. To help address gaps in the County's overall approach to reducing truancy, OLO offers four recommended issues for discussion between the Council and agency representatives.

OLO recommends the Joint Committee worksession begin with a briefing on the report by OLO staff, followed by comments from agencies' representatives. The Committee can then address OLO's recommended discussion issues and initial agency responses summarized in this packet.

Representatives of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), the Executive Branch, the State's Attorney's Office, and the Housing Opportunities Commission who are scheduled to attend this worksession include:

Agency	Representative(s)
Montgomery County Public Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frank Stetson, Office of School Performance</li><li>• Chrisandra Richardson, Office of Special Ed. and Student Services</li><li>• Stephen Zagami, Department of Student Services</li><li>• Stephanie Williams, Dept. of Reporting and Regulatory Accountability</li><li>• Steve Neff, Pupil Personnel Services Unit</li></ul>
Montgomery County Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kate Garvey, Children, Youth and Family Services, DHHS</li><li>• Assistant Chief Betsy Davis, Field Service Bureau, MCPD</li><li>• Corporal Gary Turner, Family Crimes Division, MCPD</li></ul>
State's Attorney's Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• John McCarthy, State's Attorney</li><li>• George Simms, Community Prosecution Unit</li><li>• Margaret Burrowes, Juvenile Crimes Prosecution Unit</li></ul>
Housing Opportunities Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eugene Spenser, Resident Services Division</li></ul>

**A. REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

This section summarizes key findings from the report related to truancy laws, the scope of truancy locally, best practices for reducing truancy, local practices, and the alignment between local and best practices. The report’s four-page executive summary is attached starting on ©1.

**Truancy Laws.** State law defines habitual truancy and the sanctions for truancy in the County. State regulation defines habitual truancy as an unexcused absence rate of 20 percent or more within a school year, semester, or marking period. Each Maryland school system’s count of habitually truant students, however, is limited to students who have attended the same school for 91 days or more of the given school year. As such, highly mobile students and many dropouts are excluded from habitual truant data counts.

State law allows the prosecution of adults, but not students, for truancy. Since 2005, the Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office has prosecuted 55 parents and guardians for student truancy in the County, representing about one percent of all habitual truancy cases. State law also enables the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services to petition the juvenile courts to declare truant students to be Children in Need of Supervision. Across the state, DJS rarely files formal CINS cases for habitual truancy; locally, DJS has not filed any formal CINS cases in Montgomery County in recent years based on habitual truancy.

**Scope of Truancy.** Based on MCPS’ official counts of habitually truancy, less than one percent of all MCPS students were habitually truant in 2009. Further, from 2006 to 2009, the habitual truancy rate of MCPS students decreased by five percent, from 0.75 percent to 0.71 percent of all students. As noted in the table below, high school students made up 64 percent of all habitual truants in 2009.

**MCPS’ Habitually Students by School Level, 2009**

	Number of Students	Distribution
All Schools	984	100%
High Schools	627	64%
Middle Schools	160	16%
Elementary Schools	166	17%
Special Schools	31	3%

Source: MSDE DPRR

State regulations require that MCPS collect habitual truancy data by school level and school, but not by subgroup. To understand the demographics of habitually truant students, OLO reviewed demographic data on six correlate measures that contribute to or result from truancy:

- Chronic absenteeism (i.e., absent 20 or more days during the school year);
- Out of school suspensions;
- Loss of credit in the first semester of 9<sup>th</sup> grade;
- Academic ineligibility in high school;
- Grade retention in high school ; and
- Dropping out of high school.

The higher representation of students who are black and Latino among these measures, as described in the table on the top of the next page, suggests higher rates of habitual truancy among these student groups. Additional data by gender and service subgroup status for several of these measures further suggests that male students and students enrolled in special education, ESOL and FARMs programs evidence higher rates of habitual truancy (see ©12 for data by gender and service subgroup for correlates with available data).

**Percent of MCPS Students Exhibiting Truancy Correlates, by Race and Ethnicity**

	Absent 20 or More Days-2009*	Out-of-School Suspensions-2009	Grade 9 Loss of Credit-2008**	Academic Ineligibility-2008***	Grade 9-12 Retention-2009	Grade 9-12 Dropouts-2009
<b>All Students</b>	6.9	2.5	23.2	21.1	5.3	2.7
<b>Race and Ethnicity Subgroups</b>						
Asian	3.1	0.7	11.0	10.7	2.3	1.0
Black	8.1	5.5	40.1	34.7	8.0	3.9
Latino	10.4	3.0	40.3	36.2	9.5	5.2
White	5.7	1.2	12.4	10.6	2.6	1.3

Notes: \* Grades 1-12, \*\* End of 1<sup>st</sup> semester; \*\*\* End of school year

Sources: Maryland Report Card, MCPS unpublished data, October 26, 2009 Board of Education Packet; MSDE-DAA, Summary of Attendance, 2006-2008; MCPS Annual Suspension Reports

**Research-Based Best Practices.** The evidenced-based research on truancy and dropout prevention programs identify a number of best practices for reducing truancy. The research identifies the following program components as most effective at improving student attendance:

1. Interagency collaboration – effective truancy reduction programs rely on collaboration among families, schools, and other public agencies (including law enforcement and social services agencies) to address the personal, academic, school climate, and family-related factors that contribute to truant behavior.
2. Use of data to target programs – effective truancy programs regularly review data on student attendance, behavior, and academic achievement to identify students at high risk for truancy, and to ensure that effective interventions are targeted to students most at risk.
3. School policies that promote attendance – schools with effective truancy programs ensure that their policies promote student attendance and connectedness to school by: (a) implementing effective attendance policies; (b) eliminating “push-out policies” such as suspensions for truancy and automatic class failure for poor student attendance; (c) notifying parents when absences occur; (d) ensuring that teachers respect and support all students; and (e) establishing welcoming and safe school environments.
4. A comprehensive approach – effective truancy programs focus simultaneously on prevention and intervention by implementing: (a) school-wide efforts to prevent truancy; (b) targeted initiatives to improve attendance among at-risk students; and (c) intensive interventions to improve the attendance of habitual truants. Effective interventions for highest risk students often include a focus on addressing the root causes of truancy, case management, and the use of a dedicated team to deliver intensive services.
5. Program evaluation – effective truancy programs establish concrete and measurable goals for program and student performance. Effective programs also monitor these measures to identify opportunities for program improvement and to ensure that truancy programs work as intended.

**Montgomery County Practices.** The County relies on the *Interagency Truancy Review Board (ITRB)* to address the most egregious truancy cases, representing four percent of habitual truants in 2009. The table at the top of the next page describes the ITRB agency members and representatives.

### List of Agencies with Representatives on the ITRB, 2010

Agency and Number of Representatives	Representative's Department or Office
Montgomery County Public Schools (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Student Services (Chair)</li> <li>• Residency and International Admissions Office</li> <li>• Court Liaison</li> </ul>
Department of Health and Human Services (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Welfare Services</li> <li>• School Health Services</li> <li>• Child &amp; Adolescent Outpatient Mental Health Services</li> </ul>
Montgomery County Police Department (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Services Division</li> </ul>
State's Attorney's Office (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Prosecution Unit</li> </ul>
Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Montgomery County/Rockville Regional Office</li> </ul>
Housing Opportunities Commission (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resident Services</li> </ul>

Source: MCPS Department of Student Services

MCPS manages the ITRB and serves as the lead County agency for addressing truancy, managing the cases of all truant students, including those it refers to the ITRB. More specifically, MCPS tracks data, designs, and implements specific strategies aimed at reducing truancy.

With the exception of the new Truancy Court program co-sponsored by the State's Attorney's Office, the other ITRB agencies do not operate specific truancy diversion programs. Several of the ITRB agencies, however, work independently and in partnership with MCPS to address the root causes of truancy, such as mental health and substance abuse issues and gang involvement.

**Alignment between Best and Local Practices.** OLO found that County practices partially align with best practices to curb truancy as summarized in the chart below.

### Alignment between Truancy Best Practices and Montgomery County Practices, 2010

Best Practice	Montgomery County Practices	Alignment
<b>Interagency Collaboration</b>	Informal collaboration between MCPS and the Executive Branch occurs on a case-by-case basis to address the root causes of truancy. The Interagency Truancy Review Board is the only formal interagency activity explicitly designed to address truancy.	Partially aligned
<b>Use of Data to Target Programs</b>	MCPS uses attendance data to identify students in need of truancy interventions. However, research suggests also using behavior and achievement data in addition to attendance data to target truancy reduction and dropout prevention programs.	Partially aligned
<b>School Policies to Promote Attendance</b>	MCPS promotes student attendance through positive behavior supports, fostering awareness of its attendance policies, and after-school programs. However, some policies that impose sanctions for truancy may work at cross purposes to school efforts to re-engage students and improve their attendance.	Partially aligned
<b>Comprehensive Approach</b>	MCPS' approach to providing school-wide, targeted, and intensive interventions according to student need aligns with best practice. The intensity and timing of targeted and intensive interventions, however, lags behind best practices for increasing the attendance of truant students.	Partially aligned
<b>Program Evaluation</b>	With the exception of the ITRB, MCPS has neither evaluated nor established performance measures for its truancy reduction programs. MCPS has begun to collect data that will enable an evaluation of its truancy reduction programs in the future.	Not aligned

## **B. RECOMMENDED DISCUSSION ISSUES AND INITIAL AGENCY RESPONSES**

This section describes four recommended issues for discussion between the Council and ITRB agency representatives to help address gaps in Montgomery County's approach to reducing truancy. This section also describes initial responses from MCPS and the Executive Branch on these recommended discussion issues and related report findings. Written comments from MPCS' Deputy Superintendent of Schools and from Montgomery County Government's Chief Administrative Office (CAO) are attached on ©5-9 and ©10-11, respectively.

### **Issue #1: Use of data to identify habitual truants**

OLO recommends that the Council discuss with MCPS representatives the potential merits and drawbacks of lowering the local threshold for habitual truancy and using factors other than attendance to identify students in need of truancy interventions. Specific questions to consider include the following:

- a. Has MCPS ever considered adopting a threshold for habitual truancy that is lower than the State's definition – that is, student with unexcused absences 20 percent or more of the time?
- b. What are the arguments for and against identifying students at-risk for habitual truancy based on factors other than attendance, such as academic achievement and behavior?

The Deputy Superintendent's written comments indicate that the Department of Student Services is currently working with the Office of Shared Accountability to develop a district-wide system to monitor student attendance and truancy for highly mobile students (i.e., students who do not attend the same school for 91 days of the school year).

### **Issue #2: Interagency collaboration to address truancy**

OLO recommends that the Council discuss with each ITRB agency representative whether additional opportunities for interagency collaboration to address truancy exist beyond the ITRB. More specifically, we suggest that the Council pose the following the questions:

- a. Are there ways to use the Interagency Truancy Review Board as a forum for increased collaboration among the participating agencies to address truancy?
- b. What sorts of programs or strategies are best implemented across agencies?
- c. If/when additional resources become available, what would be your agency's highest priority strategies or programs to implement to increase school attendance?

In their written comments, both the Deputy Superintendent and CAO cite their work with the Kennedy Cluster Project and Linkages to Learning as examples of cross-agency interventions that either directly or indirectly addresses truancy. The Deputy Superintendent's letter also cites MCPS' collaborative work with the Collaboration Council to meet the mental health needs of truant students; the CAO's memo also cites the Executive Branch's support of after-school programs and youth services.

The CAO's memo further indicates that effective strategies best suited for interagency collaboration include information sharing via the Kennedy Cluster model. The CAO also indicates that replicating the Kennedy Cluster model in other clusters and increasing support for Excel Beyond the Bell and out-of-school-time programs would rank among their highest priorities for targeting additional truancy reduction resources if/when they became available.

**Issue #3: Incentives for truant students to attend school regularly**

OLO recommends that the Council discuss with MCPS representatives the potential opportunities, merits, and drawbacks of enhancing incentives for truant students to attend school regularly. Recommended questions for discussion include the following:

- a. Are there ways to expand access to MCPS' career technology programs, including Edison, to chronically absent or truant students?
- b. To what extent do MCPS' Level 1 and 2 alternative programs address truancy? How successful have these programs been at increasing attendance among truant students?
- c. Are there ways to expand access to the Level 1 and 2 alternative programs to meet the needs of chronically absent or truant students?

The Deputy Superintendent's letter describes several MCPS' initiatives aimed at addressing the correlates of truancy via the M-Stat process. Staff work groups have been assembled to address several truancy correlates. These include M-Stat teams focused on suspensions and ineligibility and the formation of a Graduation Rate Project Team and a Loss of Credit Work Group. Each work group is charged with recommending strategies that will assist schools in improving student performance.

**Issue #4: Evaluation of local truancy reduction efforts**

OLO recommends that the Council discuss with ITRB agency representatives and MCPS in particular the potential value of evaluating the effectiveness of the County's truancy programs. More specifically, we recommend the Council pose the following questions during worksession:

- a. How does MCPS currently assess the effectiveness of its efforts to prevent and/or reduce truancy?
- b. In what ways could a district-wide evaluation of MCPS' truancy reduction efforts inform the school system's dropout prevention efforts?
- c. How feasible would it be to develop County-wide performance goals across agencies for truancy programs and develop a plan for conducting a formal evaluation of program effectiveness?

Page 4 of the Deputy Superintendent's letter indicates that the Department of Student Services is collaborating with the Office of Shared Accountability to develop "evaluative measures that specifically address current efforts to reduce truancy, particularly those which occur at lower levels than ITRB referrals."

**Percent of MCPS Students Exhibiting Select Truancy Correlates by Gender and Service Subgroup**

	Absent 20 or More Days 2009	Out-of-School Suspensions 2009	Grade 9-12 Dropouts 2009
All Students	6.9	2.5	2.7
<b>Gender</b>			
Female	7.1	1.4	2.1
Male	6.6	3.6	3.3
<b>Service Subgroups</b>			
FARMS	11.2	4.6	4.5
Special Education	12.6	6.2	3.8
ESOL	6.9	1.5	5.9

Notes: \* Grades 1-12

Sources: Maryland Report Card, October 26, 2009 Board of Education Packet; MCPS Annual Suspension Reports



Local

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## Future of MontCo vocational high school uncertain

By: [Leah Fabel](#)  
 Examiner Staff Writer  
 June 20, 2010

A federal grant sought by Montgomery County schools would allow for an overhaul of the district's vocational high school -- a move some parents worry will curtail options for the non-college-bound student.

The \$3.6 million Magnet Schools Assistance Program grant would affect three high schools, according to district officials.

Watkins Mill in Gaithersburg would likely become an International Baccalaureate magnet school focused on art and design. Silver Spring's Wheaton High would become either a technology magnet school or a "high-tech high" based on a similar setup in San Diego, Calif. And Thomas Edison, home of the district's vocational options but located near Wheaton, would likely become integrated with Wheaton, offering an International Baccalaureate career certificate.

Officials are considering spending some of the hoped-for money on extending the school day at Edison so students could attend their neighborhood school in the morning before heading to career training for the afternoon and early evening.

"We are trying to expand the options for students ... likely not to be as successful in a traditional high school setup," said Marty Creel, the district's director of enriched and innovative programs. "Our goal is to figure out what's working well and try to expand that."

But Creel's message isn't believed by some Edison parents who got wind this week of the proposal. They suspect the goal is to cut out the vocational options and push kids back into traditional high schools. "If Edison becomes a part of Wheaton, that's going to be a problem," said Laura Swerdlin, co-chairwoman of the county's Special Education Advisory Committee and the parent of a former Edison student. "The worry is they'll make it so high-tech that it will require higher-level courses at which these students won't be able to succeed." Swerdlin spoke for many parents long frustrated with what they perceive as Superintendent Jerry Weast's laser focus on college-bound students at the expense of those not able to or simply not interested in pursuing traditional higher education. "Our kids will be swept under the rug," Swerdlin said. At Wheaton, however, parents look to the overhaul as a net gain, said George Gadbois, a member of the PTA. "Edison is a critical component in the county's educational system, and incorporating it more into what's going on [at Wheaton] can only benefit both schools," he said. The school system has won the magnet schools grant twice in the past -- once for the creation of the Northeast Consortium schools, and once for middle school magnet reform. Notification for this year's application will arrive by August, Creel said.



The Thomas Edison High School of Technology may become integrated with Wheaton High. (Andrew Harnik/Examiner)

# The Washington Times

## D.C. Council set to tighten school-truancy standards

By Deborah Simmons

7:34 p.m., Thursday, June 24, 2010

Like Ferris Bueller and his friends, many teens consider playing hooky a rite of passage - a day off from high school for high jinks that may or may not lead to criminal activities. But when thousands of grade schoolers become chronic truants, D.C. lawmakers say its time to raise the red flag.



The D.C. Council is scheduled to vote June 29 on legislation that would tighten truancy requirements and quicken the pace at which child welfare and law enforcement authorities intervene on behalf of truant youths.

Some school officials complain, however, that parents and the general public have been shut out of discussions.

The pending legislation, introduced by council member Tommy Wells, would replace rules made just last year by the Board of Education, which allow students to accrue as many as 25 unexcused absences before child welfare and judicial authorities intervene. Mr. Wells' legislation cuts the number of days to 10.

With an estimated 8,000 kindergartners through fifth graders accumulating eight or more unexcused absences last school year, this is a "crisis" the city can no longer ignore, Mr. Wells said this week.

"Do we have a crisis?" Mr. Wells asked D.C. schools Chancellor Michelle A. Rhee during a daylong hearing on the D.C. Public Schools-Washington Teachers Union contract.

The chancellor neither agreed nor disagreed with Mr. Wells characterization, but she said there is "a lot of work to do" to curb truancy.

"We put significant resources into hiring attendance counselors," Ms. Rhee said, and there are protocols that call for teachers and administrators to contact parents before students become habitual truants. But "a lot of people haven't been properly trained or are aware" of them.

The chancellor also said that teachers engaging students and teachers relationships with family are key links to improving students attendance.

Sharing information among various agencies and adults involved in youths day-to-day interactions could help avert future risk behavior, Mr. Wells said.

"In a practical example, a youth may have skipped a few days of school, been kicked out of a recreation center for a fight, and been stopped by police for riding in a stolen vehicle," he said June 15, after lawmakers gave initial approval to his legislation. "Taken alone, each of these instances are concerning, but may not raise all the red flags needed. Current law prohibits [Department of Youth and Rehabilitative Services] and the police from alerting anyone to a potential problem through sharing information about the youth with his teacher, coach, and pastor, for example. This [legislation] breaks down those barriers."

School board member Mark Jones said the board approved its rules last year without parental input and without much weight from the public.

"I abstained from voting because we didn't have enough information ... No testimony from the public or anyone else," Mr.

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Jones told The Washington Times. "I agree with council member Wells that 25 days is too many days, but maybe we should have some benchmarks at 5 days or 10 days."

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