

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2003

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SENATE BILL 783  
Education/Higher Education Committee Substitute Adopted 4/24/03

Short Title: Raise Compulsory School Attendance Age.

(Public)

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Sponsors:

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Referred to:

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April 3, 2003

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO PROHIBIT STUDENTS FROM DROPPING OUT OF SCHOOL  
BEFORE THE AGE OF SEVENTEEN.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** G.S. 115C-378 reads as rewritten:

**"§ 115C-378. Children required to attend.**

Every parent, guardian or other person in this State having charge or control of a child between the ages of seven and ~~16~~ 17 years shall cause such child to attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session. Every parent, guardian, or other person in this State having charge or control of a child under age seven who is enrolled in a public school in grades kindergarten through two shall also cause such child to attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the public school to which the child is assigned shall be in session unless the child has withdrawn from school. No person shall encourage, entice or counsel any such child to be unlawfully absent from school. The parent, guardian, or custodian of a child shall notify the school of the reason for each known absence of the child, in accordance with local school policy.

The principal, superintendent, or teacher who is in charge of such school shall have the right to excuse a child temporarily from attendance on account of sickness or other unavoidable cause which does not constitute unlawful absence as defined by the State Board of Education. The term "school" as used herein is defined to embrace all public schools and such nonpublic schools as have teachers and curricula that are approved by the State Board of Education.

All nonpublic schools receiving and instructing children of a compulsory school age shall be required to keep such records of attendance and render such reports of the attendance of such children and maintain such minimum curriculum standards as are required of public schools; and attendance upon such schools, if the school refuses or neglects to keep such records or to render such reports, shall not be accepted in lieu of attendance upon the public school of the district to which the child shall be assigned:

1 Provided, that instruction in a nonpublic school shall not be regarded as meeting the  
2 requirements of the law unless the courses of instruction run concurrently with the term  
3 of the public school in the district and extend for at least as long a term.

4 The principal or his designee shall notify the parent, guardian, or custodian of his  
5 child's excessive absences after the child has accumulated three unexcused absences in a  
6 school year. After not more than six unexcused absences, the principal shall notify the  
7 parent, guardian, or custodian by mail that he may be in violation of the Compulsory  
8 Attendance Law and may be prosecuted if the absences cannot be justified under the  
9 established attendance policies of the State and local boards of education. Once the  
10 parents are notified, the school attendance counselor shall work with the child and his  
11 family to analyze the causes of the absences and determine steps, including adjustment  
12 of the school program or obtaining supplemental services, to eliminate the problem. The  
13 attendance counselor may request that a law-enforcement officer accompany him if he  
14 believes that a home visit is necessary.

15 After 10 accumulated unexcused absences in a school year the principal shall review  
16 any report or investigation prepared under G.S. 115C-381 and shall confer with the  
17 student and his parent, guardian, or custodian if possible to determine whether the  
18 parent, guardian, or custodian has received notification pursuant to this section and  
19 made a good faith effort to comply with the law. If the principal determines that parent,  
20 guardian, or custodian has not, he shall notify the district attorney. If he determines that  
21 parent, guardian, or custodian has, he may file a complaint with the juvenile court  
22 counselor pursuant to Chapter 7B of the General Statutes that the child is habitually  
23 absent from school without a valid excuse. Evidence that shows that the parents,  
24 guardian, or custodian were notified and that the child has accumulated 10 absences  
25 which cannot be justified under the established attendance policies of the local board  
26 shall establish a prima facie case that the child's parent, guardian, or custodian is  
27 responsible for the absences."

28 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 116-235(b)(2) reads as rewritten:

29 "(2) School Attendance. – Every parent, guardian, or other person in this  
30 State having charge or control of a child who is enrolled in the School  
31 and who is less than ~~16~~ 17 years of age shall cause such child to  
32 attend school continuously for a period equal to the time which the  
33 School shall be in session. No person shall encourage, entice, or  
34 counsel any child to be unlawfully absent from the School. Any person  
35 who aids or abets a student's unlawful absence from the School shall,  
36 upon conviction, be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor. The Director of  
37 the School shall be responsible for implementing such additional  
38 policies concerning compulsory attendance as shall be adopted by the  
39 Board of Trustees, including regulations concerning lawful and  
40 unlawful absences, permissible excuses for temporary absences,  
41 maintenance of attendance records, and attendance counseling."

42 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 7B-1501(27) reads as rewritten:

43 "(27) Undisciplined juvenile. – A juvenile who:

- 1 a. ~~A juvenile who, while less than 16 years of age but at least 6~~  
2 ~~years of age, is unlawfully absent from school; or is regularly~~  
3 ~~disobedient to and beyond the disciplinary control of the~~  
4 ~~juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian; or is regularly found in~~  
5 ~~places where it is unlawful for a juvenile to be; or has run away~~  
6 ~~from home for a period of more than 24 hours; or~~  
7 b. ~~A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years of age and who is regularly~~  
8 ~~disobedient to and beyond the disciplinary control of the~~  
9 ~~juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian; or is regularly found in~~  
10 ~~places where it is unlawful for a juvenile to be; or has run away~~  
11 ~~from home for a period of more than 24 hours.~~  
12 a. While less than 17 years of age but at least 6 years of age, is  
13 unlawfully absent from school;  
14 b. While less than 18 years of age, is regularly disobedient to and  
15 beyond the disciplinary control of the juvenile's parent,  
16 guardian, or custodian;  
17 c. While less than 18 years of age, is regularly found in places  
18 where it is unlawful for a juvenile to be; or  
19 d. While less than 18 years of age, has run away from home for a  
20 period of more than 24 hours."

21 **SECTION 4.** G.S. 143B-515(22) reads as rewritten:

22 "(22) Undisciplined juvenile. – A juvenile who:

- 23 a. ~~A juvenile who, while less than 16 years of age but at least 6~~  
24 ~~years of age, is unlawfully absent from school; or is regularly~~  
25 ~~disobedient to and beyond the disciplinary control of the~~  
26 ~~juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian; or is regularly found in~~  
27 ~~places where it is unlawful for a juvenile to be; or has run away~~  
28 ~~from home for a period of more than 24 hours.~~  
29 b. ~~A juvenile who is 16 or 17 years of age and who is regularly~~  
30 ~~disobedient to and beyond the disciplinary control of the~~  
31 ~~juvenile's parent, guardian, or custodian; or is regularly found in~~  
32 ~~places where it is unlawful for a juvenile to be; or has run away~~  
33 ~~from home for a period of more than 24 hours.~~  
34 a. While less than 17 years of age but at least 6 years of age, is  
35 unlawfully absent from school;  
36 b. While less than 18 years of age, is regularly disobedient to and  
37 beyond the disciplinary control of the juvenile's parent,  
38 guardian, or custodian;  
39 c. While less than 18 years of age, is regularly found in places  
40 where it is unlawful for a juvenile to be; or  
41 d. While less than 18 years of age, has run away from home for a  
42 period of more than 24 hours."

43 **SECTION 5.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2004.