



Texas House Committee on Public Education

HB 213 (Gonzalez)

March 18, 2025

My name is Mandi Kimball, Vice President of Children at Risk, and I am testifying in support of **HB 213**. Thank you, Chair Buckley, members of the Public Education Committee, and Vice Chair Gonzalez for sounding the alarm on increasing chronic absenteeism and its impact on student outcomes. As you may know, HB 213 is a re-filed bill and passed this committee and the full House last session.

Scope of the Problem

In 2024 Children at Risk analyzed data obtained from the Texas Education Agency. **Chronic absenteeism rates increased in Texas from 11% in 2018-2019 to 20% in 2022-2023.**

- More than 936,201 students missed at least one-tenth of their instruction in 2022-2023.
- Chronic absenteeism rates vary across regions. Within this committee alone, your districts range from 15% to 31% of students identified as chronically absent.

The rate of chronic absenteeism for special education students is 25%.

- Students who are chronically absent in Pre-K, kindergarten, or first grade are less likely to meet the appropriate third grade reading levels.
- A student who is chronically absent in any year between eighth and twelfth grade is seven times more likely to drop out of school.

So What Are We Going To Do About It?

HB 213 is a bill about support, transparency, and accountability. The bill does three things:

- Creates a definition for chronic absenteeism in the Texas Education Code as a student who misses 10% or more of instructional time within an academic year for any reason. Texas cannot effectively implement strategies and assist chronically absent students without a statewide definition of the problem it is trying to fix.

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- Adds chronic absenteeism to the “at risk” category to better support students who are chronically absent and therefore at risk of dropping out. This change ensures that existing funding can be used to fight chronic absenteeism.
- Requires TEA to report to the Texas Legislature and the general public the rates of chronic absenteeism and district and state efforts to reduce it. Transparency increases effectiveness.

How does this connect to truancy?

In our conversations with legislative offices, we are quite often asked to explain the difference between truancy and chronic absenteeism. Students who are truant are indeed chronically absent in many cases. However, there are many reasons behind chronic absenteeism that are beyond students' control, such as:

- Illness of student or relative
- Lack of engagement in school
- Lack of transportation to and from school
- Involvement with child welfare or juvenile justice
- Bullying
- Homelessness
- Health and dental issues
- Frequent changes in living situations

With a statewide chronic absenteeism definition and robust data, we can address causes of chronic absenteeism and adequately support at-risk students.

Thank you for your time and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Mandi Kimball
Vice President of Children at Risk

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