

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 1763 (Lee)
As Introduced February 9, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires a student to be excused from school when the absence is for the observance of a holiday or ceremony of the student's religion, rather than requiring the student's absence to be requested in writing by the parent and approved by the principal.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires a student to be excused from school when the absence is for the observance of a holiday or ceremony of the student's religion, rather than requiring the student's absence to be requested in writing by the parent and approved by the principal.

COMMENTS

Excused absences. California's compulsory education law requires every child between the ages of six through 18 to attend school full-time and their parents and legal guardians to be responsible for ensuring that they attend school. A student who is absent from school without a valid excuse on any day or is tardy for more than 30 minutes, or any combination thereof, for three days in a school year is considered a truant.

Current law establishes excused absences for a number of reasons, including illness, quarantine, medical appointments, attending a funeral, jury duty, illness of the student's child, a court appearance, observation of a religious holiday or ceremony, attendance at an educational conference, serving on a precinct board, spending time with an immediate family member who is an active duty member of the military, as well as for other reasons deemed to constitute a valid excuse by a school administrator based upon an individual student's circumstances.

Current law requires some excused absences to be approved by the principal, consistent with school district policy, when the absence is for specified justifiable reasons, including when the absence is for the observance of a holiday or ceremony of the student's religion. This bill would, for an absence related to the observance of a holiday or ceremony of the student's religion, remove the requirement of a justifiable reason approved by the principal and instead add this observance to the list of authorized student excused absences that do not require the approval of the principal.

Absences impact school funding. California schools are funded based on the average daily attendance (ADA) of enrolled students. The level of absenteeism, whether excused or unexcused, negatively impacts an LEA's overall funding.

Chronic absenteeism has risen significantly in recent years. Chronic absence refers to missing so much school for any reason that a student is academically at risk. Chronic absence is defined as missing 10% or more of school for any reason, including excused absences, unexcused absences or truancy, and suspensions. According to Attendance Works:

In the 2020-21 school year, at least 10.1 million students nationwide were chronically absent. We estimate chronic absence has more than doubled from the more than 8 million students,

pre-COVID-19, who were missing so many days of school that they were academically at risk. Chronic absence can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by the third-grade, achieving in middle school, and graduating from high school.

Children living in poverty are two to three times more likely to be chronically absent—and face the most harm because their community lacks the resources to make up for the lost learning in school. Students from communities of color, as well as those with disabilities, are disproportionately affected.

California's accountability system tracks chronic absenteeism as one indicator of academic engagement on the California School Dashboard. In 2025, 17.1% of students in kindergarten through 8th grade were chronically absent, considered a mid-level of concern. Chronic absenteeism rates peaked at 30% on the 2022 Dashboard.

Potential to increase chronic absenteeism by expanding excused absences. Legislation in recent years has added to the list of excused absences for the purposes of a student's mental health, participating in a cultural ceremony or event, and engaging in a civic or political event. Although each of these is worthwhile in themselves, the overall impact on student attendance must be considered. A student's absence from school for any reason may have negative impacts on their academic achievement over time.

According to the Author

According to the author, "California is home to the most diverse population in the nation and became the first to become a "minority-majority" state in 2000. With a broad and diverse range of religious traditions and faiths, our state's schools should better accommodate excused absences for religious reasons. AB 1763 recognizes the State's rich diversity by providing students the academic credit protections for absences for religious observances of holidays and ceremonies, without being subject to administrators' approvals."

Arguments in Support

Jewish California writes, "Currently, some students are not given proper accommodations to miss school without it reflecting poorly on their grades. AB 1763 promotes fairness and religious equity in school attendance policies by ensuring that students are no longer denied excused absences or proper accommodation for the observation of religious holidays and ceremonies. It simplifies the process for families by removing the need for administrative approval – an unnecessary and sometimes uncomfortable process for families simply seeking to practice their faith."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

Potential Proposition 98 General Fund (GF) savings of an unknown, potentially significant amount, possibly in the tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of dollars, to the extent students who otherwise would have attended school do not attend school because of this measure. Savings at the state level would result from a redirection of funds from local

educational agencies (LEAs) that would no longer generate state funding for students not attending school because of this measure.

LEAs receive an average of approximately \$13,700 in general purpose education funding annually per student, almost exclusively derived from average daily attendance (ADA). If 0.05% of the state's student population of about 5.8 million students were absent for one school day they otherwise would not have been absent, Proposition 98 GF costs savings to the state would be about \$221 thousand while LEAs serving those students would lose, on aggregate, a like amount.

If the Commission on State Mandates determines the bill's requirements to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state would need to reimburse these costs either directly to LEAs or through the K-12 Mandates Block Grant.

VOTES

ASM EDUCATION: 8-0-0

YES: Patel, Hoover, Alvarez, Bonta, Castillo, Garcia, Lowenthal, Zbur

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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