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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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<b>Bill No:</b>	AB 1763	<b>Hearing Date:</b>	June 17, 2026
<b>Author:</b>	Lee		
<b>Version:</b>	February 9, 2026		
<b>Urgency:</b>	No	<b>Fiscal:</b>	Yes
<b>Consultant:</b>	Therresa Austin		

**Subject:** Pupil attendance: excused absences: religious observance.

## SUMMARY

This bill requires that a student be excused from school when the absence is for the observance of a holiday or ceremony of the pupil's religion by removing the existing requirement that the student's absence be requested in writing by a parent and approved by the principal.

## BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Requires a student between the ages of 6 through 18 to attend school full-time, in the school district where either parent or legal guardian resides, except as specified. (Education Code (EC) § 48200)
- 2) Clarifies that excused absences are deemed to be absences in computing average daily attendance (ADA) and shall not generate state apportionment payments. (EC § 48205)
- 3) Requires that a student be excused from school when the absence is:
  - a) For justifiable personal reasons, including, but not limited to, an attendance or appearance in court, attendance at a funeral service, observance of a holiday or ceremony of the pupil's religion, attendance at a religious retreat, attendance at an employment conference, or attendance at an educational conference on the legislative or judicial process offered by a nonprofit organization, when the pupil's absence is requested in writing by the parent or guardian and approved by the principal or a designated representative pursuant to uniform standards established by the governing board of the school district;
  - b) For the purpose of serving as a member of a precinct board for an election;
  - c) For the purpose of spending time with a member of the student's immediate family who is an active duty member of the uniformed services, and has been called to duty for, is on leave from, or has immediately returned from, deployment to a combat zone or combat support position;

- d) For purposes of attending the pupil's naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen;
  - e) For purposes of participating in a cultural ceremony or event;
  - f) For the purpose of a middle or high school student engaging in a civic or political event for no more than one schoolday per year, provided that the student notifies the school ahead of the absence;
  - g) Due to the pupil's participation in military entrance processing;
  - h) For any of the following purposes, if an immediate family member of the student, or a person that is determined by the student's parent or guardian to be in such close association with the student as to be considered the student's immediate family, has died, so long as the absence is not more than three days per incident:
    - i) To access services from a victim services organization or agency;
    - ii) To access grief support services; and
    - iii) To participate in safety planning or to take other actions to increase the safety of the student or an immediate family member of the student, or a person that is determined by the student's parent or guardian to be in such close association with the student as to be considered the student's immediate family, including, but not limited to, temporary or permanent relocation.
  - i) Authorized at the discretion of a school administrator. (EC § 48205)
- 4) Specifies that absences beyond three days for the reasons described in h) above are subject to the discretion of the school administrator or their designee. (EC § 48205)
  - 5) Provides that a valid excuse may include other reasons that are within the discretion of school administrators and based on the facts of the pupil's circumstances. (EC § 48260)
  - 6) Clarifies each person between the ages of 6 and 18 years is subject to compulsory full-time education, and each person subject to compulsory continuation education must attend the public full-time day school or continuation school or classes and for the full time designated as the length of the schoolday by the governing board of the school district where the parent or guardian is located. (EC § 48200)
  - 7) Authorizes a principal or teacher to require a satisfactory explanation from the parent or guardian of a pupil, either in person or by written note, whenever the pupil is absent a part of or all of a school day. Prohibits that requirement from

being imposed until the following day. (California Code of Regulations. Title 5, § 306)

## ANALYSIS

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

## STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** 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 different requirements than other excused absences."
- 2) ***Excused absences do not generate ADA.*** In California, school funding is primarily calculated using ADA. Each time a student is absent, that absence negatively impacts that local educational agency's (LEA's) ADA, ultimately reducing their overall funding. While each absence may be insignificant relative to overall funding levels, in the aggregate, absences impact overall funding. Under current law, all absences, whether excused or unexcused, reduce overall ADA.

Students can currently have an absence excused for the observance of a religious holiday or ceremony of the pupil's religion; however, this bill seeks to reduce the potential burdens of getting the excusal by removing the statutory requirement for those absences to be first requested by a parent or guardian and then approved by a principal or designated representative.

If a school notes that a student is absent and has not received an indication from the student or parent that the absence was for the observance of a religious holiday or ceremony, per regulation, a principal or teacher may require a satisfactory explanation from the parent or guardian of a pupil, either in person or by written note. The explanation shall not be required until the following day.

- 3) ***Unexcused Absences Trigger Truancy Provisions.*** While excused and unexcused absences may be treated the same for funding purposes, they are not treated the same for attendance purposes. A student absent from school without a valid excuse on any day or tardy for more than 30 minutes, or any combination thereof, for three days in a school year is considered a truant. After a student has been reported as a truant three or more times in one school year and after an appropriate school employee has made a conscientious effort to hold at least one meeting with the parent and the student, the student is deemed a habitual truant. When it has been determined to be a habitual truant, the student may be referred to a school attendance review board or to the county probation department.

These interventions are designed to divert students with serious attendance and behavioral problems from the juvenile justice system and to reduce the number of students who drop out of school.

- 4) **Chronic Absenteeism.** The table below represents the California Department of Education’s (CDE) absenteeism and chronic absenteeism data from the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years (SY). The data shows significant differences amongst racial/ethnic groups, both in terms of comparing the percentages of absences designated as excused vs unexcused, and in the overall average number of absences. Even if a student has excused absences, they are considered chronically absent if they miss 10% of the days they were expected to attend school.

The table below captures absenteeism data submitted by LEAs through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS):

Race/Ethnicity	Avg. Days Absent		Excused		Unexcused		Chronic Absenteeism Rate	
	2023-24 SY	2024-25 SY	2023-24 SY	2024-25 SY	2023-24 SY	2024-25 SY	2023-24 SY	2024-25 SY
<b>African American</b>	17.5	17.2	36.9%	36.6%	53.5%	53.6%	32.3%	31.3%
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	18.5	18.2	43.5%	43.4%	47.1%	45.7%	33.0%	31.6%
<b>Asian</b>	8.3	8.3	64.2%	62.8%	32.9%	34.1%	8.6%	8.1%
<b>Filipino</b>	9.0	8.7	68.5%	68.4%	27.5%	27.7%	10.0%	9.1%
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	14.1	13.7	50.1%	49.8%	43.6%	44.2%	23.6%	22.3%
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	16.8	16.5	46.3%	46.6%	47.7%	47.3%	32.3%	31.3%
<b>White</b>	9.1	11.6	59.5%	58.5%	34.0%	33.7%	15.9%	15.1%
<b>Two or More Races</b>	12.1	12.1	56.8%	55.3%	36.4%	37.8%	17.3%	16.5%
<b>Not Reported</b>	12.	12.7%	55.3%	54.0%	37.9%	39.4%	19.9%	19.4%
<b>Statewide</b>	13.1	12.8	52.3%	51.8%	41.4%	41.8%	20.4%	19.4%

As the table shows, California saw a modest reduction in chronic absenteeism rates between the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. However, the variations of chronic absenteeism rates across student groups continue to persist.

- 5) **Prior and related legislation.**

SB 350 (Ashby, Chapter 601, Statutes of 2023) extends the time permitted for an excused absence for attending a funeral from up to three days to five days for each incident, expands the authorization from a funeral of an immediate family member to include a person determined by the student’s parent to be considered immediate family, and includes accessing grief support or victim services due to

the death of an immediate family member or close associate as an additional excused absence.

AB 1503 (Lee, Chapter 846, Statutes of 2023) extends the excused absence provision for a student to attend a religious retreat from four hours or a half-day to one full day.

SB 955 (Leyva, Chapter 921, Statutes of 2022) authorizes one excused absence per year for a middle or high school student to participate in a civic or political event, provided that the student notifies the school ahead of the absence.

SB 14 (Portantino, Chapter 672, Statutes of 2021) includes, specifically, “for the benefit of the behavioral health of the student” within the “illness” category for excused absences for purposes of school attendance; and requires the CDE to identify an evidence-based and evidence-informed training program for LEAs to address youth behavioral health, including staff and student training.

AB 516 (Megan Dahle, Chapter 281, Statutes of 2021) adds participation in a cultural ceremony or event to the list of reasons that a student must be excused from school.

AB 1949 (Low, Chapter 767, Statutes of 2022) requires private employers with five or more employees and public sector employers to provide employees with at least 30 days of service up to five unpaid days of bereavement leave upon the death of a family member.

AB 1593 (Oberholte, Chapter 92, Statutes of 2016) adds a student’s attendance at his or her naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen to the list of excused absences.

## **SUPPORT**

Jewish California (sponsor)  
30 Years After  
Adat Shalom Los Angeles  
ADL  
Agudath Israel of California  
AJC - Los Angeles  
AJC - San Diego  
AJC Northern California  
Bay Area Center to Counter Antisemitism  
Bay Area Jewish Coalition Education & Advocacy  
Beverly Hills Synagogue  
Board of Rabbis of Southern California  
California Catholic Conference  
California Jewish Democrats  
California Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism  
Chai Marin  
Contra Costa Jewish Democrats  
Democrats for Israel Los Angeles

Hadassah, the Women's Zionist of America  
Hillel of San Diego  
Holocaust Museum LA  
Intercultural Networks Group  
JCAN  
JCC/Federation of San Luis Obispo  
JCRC Bay Area  
JCRC Santa Barbara County  
JCRC, Jewish Long Beach  
Jewish Center for Justice  
Jewish Community Relations Council of Sacramento  
Jewish Council for Public Affairs  
Jewish Democratic Club of Marin  
Jewish Democratic Coalition of the Bay Area  
Jewish Family and Children's Services of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties  
Jewish Family Service LA  
Jewish Family Service of San Diego  
Jewish Family Service of the Desert  
Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley  
Jewish Federation Bay Area  
Jewish Federation Los Angeles  
Jewish Federation of Greater Santa Barbara  
Jewish Federation of Orange County  
Jewish Federation of San Diego  
Jewish Federation of the Desert  
Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys  
Jewish Federation of the Sacramento Region  
Jewish Federation of Ventura County  
Jewish Free Loan Association  
Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation  
Jewish Silicon Valley  
JFCS East Bay  
JFCS Long Beach and Orange County  
National Council of Jewish Women -SF  
Northern California Jewish Labor Committee  
Oakland Jewish Alliance  
Palo Alto Jewish Alliance  
Progressive Zionists of California  
SF Jews in School  
Simon Wiesenthal Center  
StandWithUs  
The Jewish Coalition of Berkeley  
Valley Beth Shalom

**OPPOSITION**

None received