
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1763 (Lee) - Pupil attendance: excused absences: religious observance

Version: February 9, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: June 29, 2026

Policy Vote: ED. 7 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill 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.

Fiscal Impact: To the extent there are students who do not attend school as a result of this measure, it could result in additional, unknown Proposition 98 General Fund savings. However, each time a student is absent, that absence negatively impacts the average daily attendance (ADA) of the local educational agency (LEA). While each individual absence may be insignificant, in the aggregate, the absences reduce the overall amount of funding that LEAs receive from the state.

Background: Existing law provides that excused absences are deemed to be absences in computing ADA and shall not generate state apportionment payments. The law specifies a list of reasons that constitute an excused absence, which include:

1. Due to the pupil's illness, including an absence for the benefit of the pupil's mental or behavioral health; quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer; have a medical, dental, optometric, or chiropractic services during school hours.
2. For the purpose of attending the funeral services of a member of the pupil's immediate family or spending time with a member of the pupil's immediate family who is an active duty member of the uniformed services.
3. Jury duty or justifiable personal reasons, including, but not limited to, an 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.
4. Attending a naturalization ceremony to become a United States citizen; participating in a cultural ceremony or event.

Existing law 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.

Proposed Law: 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.

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.

Staff Comments: In California, school funding is primarily calculated using ADA. Each time a student is absent, that absence negatively impacts that school district's ADA, thereby reducing its' overall funding. While each individual absence may be insignificant, in the aggregate, absences do have impact on overall funding. Under current law, all absences, whether excused or unexcused, result in a reduction of overall ADA.

This bill could result in Proposition 98 GF savings to the extent students who would have otherwise attended school do not attend school as a result of this measure. The savings at the state level would result from a redirection of funds from school districts that would no longer generate state funding for these students.

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