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THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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HOUSE BILL

No. 1648 Session of  
2025

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INTRODUCED BY N. NELSON, BURGOS, HILL-EVANS, BRIGGS, GIRAL,  
SCHLOSSBERG, SANCHEZ, RIVERA, CEPEDA-FREYTIZ, D. WILLIAMS,  
MAYES AND WARREN, JUNE 23, 2025

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REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, JUNE 24, 2025

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AN ACT

1 Amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), entitled "An  
2 act relating to the public school system, including certain  
3 provisions applicable as well to private and parochial  
4 schools; amending, revising, consolidating and changing the  
5 laws relating thereto," in pupils and attendance, further  
6 providing for definitions and providing for mental health  
7 days.

8 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
9 hereby enacts as follows:

10 Section 1. The definition of "excused absence" in section  
11 1326 of the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the  
12 Public School Code of 1949, is amended to read:

13 Section 1326. Definitions.--When used in this article, the  
14 following words and phrases shall have the following meanings:

15 \* \* \*

16 "Excused absence" shall mean an absence from school which is  
17 permitted under section 1329 or 1329.1.

18 \* \* \*

19 Section 2. The act is amended by adding a section to read:

20 Section 1329.1. Mental Health Days.--(a) No later than the

1 beginning of the 2026-2027 school year, each board of directors  
2 or governing body of a public, nonpublic or private school shall  
3 adopt policies to provide an excused absence from compulsory  
4 school attendance required under this act for a mental health  
5 day when a student's well-being is at risk due to mental or  
6 physical fatigue, regardless of whether the underlying mental  
7 health-related condition triggering the fatigue is a certified  
8 mental health-related condition or an uncertified mental health-  
9 related condition. The policy adopted under this subsection may  
10 be based on the model policy developed by the department under  
11 subsection (d).

12 (b) The excused absence under subsection (a) shall be  
13 categorized as a mental health day.

14 (c) Notwithstanding section 1329 or 22 Pa. Code § 11.25  
15 (relating to temporary excusals due to illness or other urgent  
16 reasons), a student may use up to two consecutive days for a  
17 mental health day. Except as provided by the policy adopted  
18 under subsection (a), a student shall not be permitted to use  
19 three or more mental health days in a week or in two or more  
20 consecutive weeks. Except as provided by the policy adopted  
21 under subsection (a), additional days needed for mental or  
22 physical fatigue due to an underlying mental health-related  
23 condition shall be permitted under the policies and procedures  
24 adopted by the school under section 1329.

25 (d) Within ninety (90) days of the effective date of this  
26 section, the department shall develop and publish guidelines for  
27 schools to implement mental health days and a model policy that  
28 would meet the requirements of this section for adoption under  
29 subsection (a). The department shall include evidence-based  
30 guidance for a school to integrate the school's responses to

1 student-excused absences for a mental health day into the  
2 school's support systems for student well-being. The guidance  
3 shall also include evidence-based best practices for a school  
4 employe as designated in the policy adopted under subsection  
5 (a), to contact a student who uses two or more mental health  
6 days and to connect the student to mental health support. In  
7 developing the guidelines, the department shall consult with a  
8 student advisory group and school administrators:

9 (1) whose members are directly impacted by student absence  
10 rules and policies; and

11 (2) who represent the diversity of the public school  
12 population, including diversity in gender identity, family  
13 income, race and ethnicity, geography and any other factors the  
14 department determines are relevant.

15 (e) As used in this section, the following words and phrases  
16 shall have the meanings given to them in this subsection:

17 "Certified mental health-related condition" means a condition  
18 or behavior recognized and diagnosed through examination of the  
19 student by a physician or mental health professional, including:

20 (1) Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

21 (2) Anxiety.

22 (3) Depression.

23 (4) Obsessive compulsive disorder.

24 (5) Learning and developmental disabilities.

25 (6) Autism.

26 (7) Substance use disorder.

27 (8) Eating disorders.

28 (9) Self-harm.

29 (10) Any other similar condition or behavior recognized and  
30 diagnosed through examination of the student by a physician or

1 mental health professional.

2 "Extended family" means a member of the student's family  
3 network, including an aunt, uncle, cousin, niece or nephew who  
4 lives in the same community as the student. The family member  
5 may be related to the student as a natural relative, by marriage  
6 to a natural relative or through the adoption process and may be  
7 of any degree up to the third degree.

8 "Fatigue" means a reduction of energy, stamina or focus that  
9 impacts mental or physical performance due to stressors or other  
10 related certified mental health-related conditions or  
11 uncertified mental health-related conditions.

12 "Immediate family" means a member of the student's nuclear  
13 family, including any of the following related to the student as  
14 a natural relative, by marriage to a natural relative or through  
15 the adoption process:

16 (1) A parent, grandparent, sibling or near relative who  
17 resides in the same household as the student.

18 (2) A child of the student.

19 "Mental health day" means a day to allow a student to attain  
20 care, rest or treatment to address a certified mental health-  
21 related condition or uncertified mental health-related  
22 condition.

23 "School" means a school district, area career and technical  
24 school, charter school, cyber charter school or independent  
25 school.

26 "Uncertified mental health-related condition" means a  
27 condition or behavior exhibited by a student that has not been  
28 diagnosed by a physician or mental health professional, but that  
29 causes the student to experience overwhelming feelings of  
30 stress, situational grief or trauma-induced suffering which

1 impede learning, including:

2 (1) The death of or a severe injury sustained by a member of  
3 the student's immediate family or the student's extended family.

4 (2) The death of the student's emotional support service  
5 animal.

6 (3) A school-related incident or event that traumatically  
7 affected the student, the student's friend or a staff member,  
8 classroom aide, administrator or teacher at the school.

9 (4) A community incident or event that induced trauma for  
10 the student.

11 (5) An accident or incident resulting in death or harm,  
12 injury or suffering of the student, an immediate or extended  
13 family member or a friend of the student regardless of where the  
14 accident or incident occurred.

15 (6) An act of bullying of the student by another student at  
16 the school, the school grounds or the route used to traverse to  
17 and from the school, if the act was reported by the student to  
18 the school.

19 (7) Compounding stressors, including academic pressure,  
20 burnout and any other factors that impact a student's ability to  
21 focus due to poor mental health.

22 (8) Any other similar reason, incident or event triggering  
23 mental or physical fatigue due to an underlying mental health-  
24 related stressor even though the student has not been diagnosed  
25 by a physician or mental health professional.

26 Section 3. This act shall take effect in 60 days.