

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF THE TRUANCY PROVISIONS IN
RAISED BILL NO. 6499 AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO THE
EDUCATION STATUTES**

This testimony is submitted on behalf of Christina Pannone, Care Coordinator at the Child and Family Guidance Center of Greater Bridgeport.

The amount of truancy in the schools is a growing at a disturbing rate and the negligence by the schools is even more disturbing. In my experience schools delay filing for a very long time, sometimes 3-4 months, or sometimes they don't file at all.

I have numerous examples of children that have exceeded the monthly and, sometimes, the yearly quota within the first month of school and the school does not notify the courts until late winter or early spring.

Who is being held accountable?

By not filing FWSNs in a timely manner, schools fail to intervene in a pattern of truancy that continues unabated. It is easier to ignore the problem than to do the work it takes to find out what the underlying causes of the truancy are.

I would like to share a story about a *ten-year-old* child who had enough absences to be declared truant by October. The school claims to have repeatedly called a nonworking phone number for three months after his absences well exceeded the amount to qualify him as truant. Yet they never filed a FWSN, or tried to contact any other resources that may have helped intervene. Finally, after *four months* they found out that this child's family had since become *homeless*, which is why he had missed so much school.

In my experience, many of these students have special needs that are not being met by the school, and therefore feel that being in class is a waste of time. Unfortunately this provokes a vicious cycle; once they are marked as a truant the school tries to prevent them from accessing the special education services that they should be provided by law.

Although there are many stories, one particular I would like to share is about a 16 year old who has been promoted to 11th grade even though he has zero credits his first two years of high school. He has well over 300 absences throughout the past 3 years. His freshman year he was truant within the first month of school and FWSN was never filed. When the school

contacted the parent, she said that couldn't be because she brings him to school every morning. Come to find out he was going to school every day for 2 years and not going to class. He had made friends with the security guards in the hall so they didn't report him, his teachers never reported his absences, the faculty did nothing since he wasn't a trouble maker. Finally, FWSN did get involved and after he underwent academic and psychological evaluations it was discovered that he has a reading disability, as well as, a general anxiety disorder. These two problems coupled together kept him from going to his classes which had 30+ students in them and teachers who couldn't be bothered when he needed things explained repeatedly. He now has to repeat 9th and 10th grade. During PPTs that were held to determine available services for him the school very honestly said that he is one of many who come to school and don't go to class. Each of these students has a reason why and a unique story to tell that nobody is taking the time to listen to.

The school system points the finger at the parent, the parent at the student, but nobody takes the time to uncover the underlying factor. The unfortunate outcomes of most truancy cases result in expulsion of the student from school or the student dropping out.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our clients' stories.

Respectfully submitted,

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