



The Keep Kids in School Act

U.S. Senator Michael Bennet

June 2026

American kids are struggling both in and outside of school. National reading and math scores have remained stagnant¹ and chronic absenteeism persists.² Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing at least 10 percent of days in a school year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences. Research suggests that children who are chronically absent for multiple years between preschool and second grade are much less likely to read at grade level by the third grade.³ In addition, students who are chronically absent are more likely to feel socially isolated, anxious and lonely.⁴

The Keep Kids in School Act would create a grant program that allows schools to spend funds on tools to increase attendance and create safe learning environments. The bill would help reduce national chronic absenteeism by directing the Secretary of Education to prioritize grants to states with high levels of chronic absenteeism, like Colorado.

Specifically, schools could use funds for:

- Hiring additional counselors, mental health professionals, social workers, or family liaisons;
- Providing stipends to teachers to perform home visits for students who are chronically absent;
- Supporting programming to address chronic absenteeism and to improve safety in learning environments;
- Investing in research and data collection so schools and local educational agencies can track absenteeism rates, patterns, and root causes throughout the school year.

The bill also requires the Comptroller General to conduct a study on chronic absenteeism and the methods that are and are not working to keep students in school. This bill is inspired by Alamosa School District which was able to reduce their chronic absenteeism rate in the 2023-24 school year by 5% and improved their average daily attendance to 92.7%⁵ by increasing meetings between staff and families and working with local businesses to amplify the message of why showing up to school is essential.

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2026/06/10/nx-s1-5844932/naep-long-term-trends-reading-math>

² <https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/supporting-students/chronic-absenteeism>

³ <https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/supporting-students/chronic-absenteeism>

⁴ <https://www.wiaap.org/understanding-the-link-between-mental-health-school-attendance-and-chronic-absenteeism/#:~:text=When%20students%20miss%20school%2C%20their,health%20challenges%20%E2%80%93%20deepen%20their%20struggles.>

⁵ https://www.attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CO_AW_Narrative_Success_Story_052925.pdf