
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 158 Session of
2015

INTRODUCED BY PEIFER, MILLARD, LONGIETTI, O'NEILL, GROVE, MURT,
TALLMAN, SAYLOR, M. K. KELLER, CARROLL, READSHAW, MAJOR AND
TOPPER, JANUARY 22, 2015

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, JANUARY 22, 2015

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," providing for secretary declaration
6 of emergencies.

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

9 Section 1. The act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known
10 as the Public School Code of 1949, is amended by adding a
11 section to read:

12 Section 1505. Secretary Declaration of Emergencies.--(a)
13 Beginning in the 2015-2016 school year and in each school year
14 thereafter, the Secretary of Education may issue a weather-
15 related, safety-related or health-related emergency declaration
16 on a school district, county or Statewide basis under which a
17 school entity may satisfy the one hundred eighty (180)
18 instructional day per school year requirement in section 1501 of
19 this act by one or more of the following options:

1 (1) Approving, by majority vote of the governing board of
2 the school entity, a school year with a minimum of nine hundred
3 (900) hours of instruction at the elementary level and nine
4 hundred ninety (990) hours of instruction at the secondary level
5 in lieu of one hundred eighty (180) instructional days.

6 (2) Approving, by majority vote of the governing board of
7 the school entity, the scheduling of additional instructional
8 days on Saturdays to complete one hundred eighty (180)
9 instructional days or nine hundred (900) hours of instruction at
10 the elementary level and nine hundred ninety (990) hours of
11 instruction at the secondary level: Provided, however, that a
12 school entity shall not schedule more than one Saturday per
13 month as an instructional day and shall not schedule tests or
14 other examinations on a Saturday. Where a school entity chooses
15 to schedule an instructional day on Saturday under the
16 provisions of this paragraph, the following shall apply:

17 (i) The school entity may schedule a regular instructional
18 day on the following Monday.

19 (ii) The school entity shall, upon the written request of a
20 parent or guardian, excuse a student from school attendance if
21 the student has the opportunity to receive a program of advanced
22 instruction, to participate in academic or skills competition or
23 to engage in leadership development activities. The request
24 shall identify and describe the instruction, competition or
25 leadership development activities and the dates and hours for
26 which the absence is requested. The parent or guardian shall,
27 following each such absence, furnish in writing to the school
28 entity a statement attesting to the student's participation,
29 including the dates and hours of such participation.

30 (iii) The school entity shall, upon the written notification

1 of a parent or guardian, excuse a student from school attendance
2 to observe or participate in a religious activity or function. A
3 student's absence from school pursuant to this subparagraph
4 shall be considered an instructional day and shall not be
5 recorded as an absence on the student's attendance record or on
6 the record of any group or class of which the student is a
7 member. There shall be no penalty attached for any such absences
8 pursuant to this subparagraph.

9 (b) A school entity shall notify the department, on a form
10 to be developed by the department, of any decision to use the
11 options provided for under subsection (a) to satisfy the one
12 hundred eighty (180) instructional day per school year
13 requirement.

14 (c) No school entity shall receive less subsidy payments or
15 reimbursements than it would otherwise be entitled to receive by
16 the decision to use the options provided under subsection (a).

17 (d) As used in this section, the following words and phrases
18 shall have the meanings given to them in this subsection unless
19 the context clearly indicates otherwise:

20 "Department" shall mean the Department of Education of the
21 Commonwealth.

22 "School entity" shall mean a school district, area
23 vocational-technical school, intermediate unit, charter school,
24 regional charter school or cyber charter school.

25 Section 2. This act shall take effect in 60 days.