

applicable to parents who fail to ensure the attendance of older school children be extended to the parents of truant or habitually absent kindergartners.

Under current law, when any child of compulsory school age is not attending school, the school district attendance officer must notify the parent or guardian, and this person must cause the child to attend school. If the parent or guardian fails to cause the child to attend school, the attendance officer must either make a complaint against this person in court or, if directed by the superintendent or district board, send a notice requiring attendance at a parental education program. The parent or guardian of a child of compulsory school age who violates the compulsory education law is subject to a fine of not less than \$5 and not more than \$20, or that person may be required to give a bond of \$100 as a surety that the child will attend school. The Ohio School Board Association estimated that less than one case per district is referred to the court system and that most of these cases involve middle and high school aged children. Counties may see an increase in revenues and expenditures if more cases are prosecuted and more fines levied, but it is likely to be minimal at best.

As an alternative to a monetary penalty, a parent or guardian of a truant or habitually absent child may be ordered to attend a parental education program. School districts may see an increase in expenditures if more parents or guardians are referred to these programs. Districts must bear the costs of running these programs themselves. Failure to attend these parental education programs is a fourth degree misdemeanor.

Synopsis of Changes from Preceding Version

The “As Introduced” version of H.B. 281 bill considers any child who has entered kindergarten and who has not been withdrawn by the first full week of October to be of “compulsory school age.” The substitute version of the bill also allows the child to be withdrawn at any time during the school year if the child’s teacher and school principal in consultation with the child’s parent or guardian determine that this move is in the best interest of the child. A child withdrawn for this reason is not considered to be of “compulsory school age.”

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