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K. Johnson, Kowalko, Lambert, Longhurst, Lynn, Minor-
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Wilson-Anton; Sens. Hansen, Lockman, S. McBride,
Paradee, Pinkney, Walsh

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
151st GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE BILL NO. 175

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

1 WHEREAS, not everything about civics and politics can be learned in a classroom; and

2 WHEREAS, attending civic engagement activities gives young people “real world” experience regarding politics
3 and society; and

4 WHEREAS, attending civic engagement activities makes young people feel that they have a voice in the political
5 process; and

6 WHEREAS, we should encourage young people to be knowledgeable about and active in the political process and
7 in their communities; and

8 WHEREAS, attending civic engagement activities encourages young people to be engaged in the political process
9 and their communities as adults; and

10 WHEREAS, many students are already active in their communities and care deeply about social, political, and
11 legislative issues, and deserve opportunities to be as active as possible.

12 NOW, THEREFORE:

13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

14 Section 1. Amend Chapter 27, Title 14 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and
15 insertions as shown by underline as follows:

16 § 2702. Compulsory attendance requirements; evaluation of readiness; exit interview.

17 (h) Every student who is enrolled in a public school of this State in grades 6 through 12 shall be allowed one
18 excused absence per school year to attend a civic engagement activity, which includes visiting Capitol Hill in Washington,
19 D.C. or Legislative Hall in Dover, visiting a site of significant historical or cultural importance, advocating for or testifying
20 on behalf of legislation, or participating in a rally, march, protest, or walkout.

(1) “One excused absence” is defined as one partial or full school day. Students may not take more than one excused partial day and combine them to consider them to be “one excused absence”.

(2) For any civic engagement event that occurs on a day when the student’s school is not in session, the student may not “redeem” or “exchange” this non-school day for an excused absence on a school day.

(3) For a student to attend a civic engagement event, the student’s parent or guardian must provide written permission to the school principal or designee no later than 3 school days prior to the student’s planned absence. It is incumbent upon each school to determine what is acceptable as written permission, either a letter or email from the parent or guardian, or a form designed by the school or school district. If the principal or another school or school district official does not confirm receipt of acceptable written permission of the excused absence with the parent or guardian prior to the student’s planned absence, the student’s absence to attend the civic engagement event the student’s absence is presumed excused.

(4) The Delaware Department of Education is not responsible for monitoring, tracking, or gathering any information or data regarding students’ excused absences to participate in civic engagement activities.

~~(h)~~ (i) A child over the age of 16 may withdraw from public school prior to graduation if both of the following circumstances exist:

Section 2. This Act takes effect on January 1, 2022.

SYNOPSIS

This Act allows one excused absence per school year for students grades 6 through 12 to attend civic engagements such as visits to the United States Capitol, Legislative Hall, and sites of political and cultural significance, or participation in a rally, march, protest, or walkout. For a student to attend a civic engagement event, the student’s parent or guardian must provide written permission no later than 3 school days prior to the student’s planned absence. The school shall determine what is acceptable as written permission. If the principal or another school or school district official does not confirm receipt of written permission with the parent or guardian prior to the student’s planned absence, permission for the student to attend the civic engagement event as an excused absence is presumed.