



The Bell Policy Center

Research • Advocacy • Opportunity

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Success from the session

Parental leave bill will aid students and state

Children perform better in school when their parents are active partners in their education, and the bottom-line goal of HB 09-1057 is to make it possible for more parents to be involved.

The bill, supported by the Bell, has passed the legislature and will soon be sent to Gov. Bill Ritter. We consider it a vitally important step toward closing the achievement gap, reducing the dropout rate and increasing advancement toward postsecondary education.

Under the bill, more parents will be able take leave from work in order to attend parent-teacher conferences and other specified academic activities.

The Bell's Frank Waterous testified in favor of the bill and produced a positive *Opportunity Note* on it. The *Opportunity Note* pointed out that parental involvement in children's education is consistently cited as one of the key elements associated with lower dropout rates and increased student achievement.

Recent findings suggest that parental involvement is the single strongest predictor of Latino academic performance. Yet low-income and minority parents are especially likely to work in jobs that do not provide the time off and flexible schedules needed to meet personal and family needs. Several studies have found that while families of all incomes, educational levels and ethnic/racial backgrounds support their children's learning at home, white, middle-class families tend to be more involved at school.

HB 09-1057 will help alleviate this problem for many hard-working families. It allows parents who work for an employer with 50 or more employees to take unpaid leave to attend parent-teacher conferences and other specified academic activities related to their children's educational advancement. The leave would be prorated for employees who work less than full time, and employers already providing comparable paid or unpaid leave are not required by the bill to provide

additional leave.

The bill limits such leave to six hours in any month and 18 hours in any academic year; it also allows employers to limit leave in certain cases related to health and safety or halts of service or production.

Waterous told lawmakers that the bill represented “a prudent public policy decision.”

“Students whose parents are involved in their educational success both at home and at school are more likely to graduate and go on to earn postsecondary credentials,” Waterous said. “As a result, HB 09-1057 carries both individual and societal benefits. On an individual level, earnings dramatically increase and unemployment rates decrease with each higher level of education attained. On the societal level, the foundation of a strong and competitive state economy is a well-educated citizenry and workforce.”

Because attempts to enact similarly intended legislation proved unsuccessful in previous sessions, this year's passage of HB 09-1057 is a particularly significant victory for expanded opportunity in our state.