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House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Harrisburg

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MEMORANDUM

TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative Kate M. Harper

RE: Co-sponsor Request – Unnecessary Truancy-related Referrals

DATE: June 8, 2012

I am preparing to introduce legislation that will amend the Public School Code to reduce the instance of unnecessary truancy-related referrals to child welfare authorities.

Children and Youth Agencies receive a number of referrals for “habitually truant” children each year that do not necessarily rise to the level of a child welfare problem. Many schools refer children to Children and Youth without attempting to identify and resolve the reasons for the child’s unexcused absences. Likewise, ambiguity in the School Code allows a child to be referred to Children and Youth as the result of a few unexcused absences that occurred over a period of several school years.

In order to ensure that children referred into the child welfare system as the result of truancy concerns are truly in need of the involvement of child welfare authorities, my legislation would require school districts to develop an individualized truancy elimination plan before referring a child to a county Children and Youth Agency. Additionally, clarifying that the number of unexcused absences required to qualify a child as “habitually truant” must occur within a single school year will eliminate the ability of a school district to refer a child to Children and Youth for unexcused absences that occurred over multiple school years.

I hope that you will join me by cosponsoring this legislation. If you would like to do so, please contact Karen Zivic or Cassondra Haldeman in my office at kzivic@pahousegop.com or chaldema@pahousegop.com or by phone at 787-2801.

KMH:kz