



May 9, 2024

The Honorable Joseph McNamara  
Honorable Members of the House Education Committee

RE: HB8190 Support

Chairman McNamara and Members of the House Education Committee:

As the CEO of Tides Family Services, I respectfully submit the following written testimony:

I am writing to support **House Bill 8190 Attendance For Success Act**. This establishes the “Attendance for Success Act” which focuses on student attendance in schools with an emphasis on chronically absent students.

Tides Family Services provides a multitude of critical community-based child welfare, juvenile justice, and behavioral health programs for children and families throughout the entire State. We bring a broad perspective based on over 40 years of providing services to children and families in Rhode Island.

Tides Family Services completed a data report based on a total of 309 clients who had “truancy” as one of their referral reasons during 2023. Highlights from this report are as follows:

- Only 2% of TFS truancy clients attend a school without a chronic absenteeism problem.
- The Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) score was 65% of clients in treatment for truancy had two or more ACEs compared with 20% of Rhode Island children.
- Many of our truancy clients have a mental health diagnosis that could impact chronic absenteeism: 43% have PTSD or another adjustment disorder, 21% have ADHD diagnosis, and 15% have a social phobia or anxiety.
  - Only 34% of clients reported having an IEP or 504 plan.

Tides Family Services client voices regarding chronic absenteeism:

- *“Client is experiencing stress related to anxiety about school and other issues going on in her life.”*
- *“When I was home with my parents, I wasn’t able to go to school. They would keep me up all night and I would miss a lot of school.”*
- *“There was a falling out with her previous friend group that occurred in the last 6 months and that has led to a significant decrease in her wanting to leave and increase in her time at home.”*

Tides Family Services strongly urges you to pass HB 8190 legislation to improve attendance and therefore life-long trajectory of youth in the state.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth A. Bixby, MSW, LICSW  
CEO Tides Family Services