



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Catalina Rodriguez Lima, Director, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	2/13/2025
SUBJECT	BILL 25-0002 Study and Report – Absences in Baltimore City Schools

Position: Favorable

BILL SYNOPSIS

Council Bill 25-0002, introduced by Councilmember Conway, mandates the Baltimore City Public School System (“City Schools”) to prepare a comprehensive report exploring the causes of student absences. The goal is to identify solutions addressing the persistent barriers to attending school, involving collaboration with multiple city agencies.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

The Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MIMA) supports City Council Bill 25-0002 – Study and Report – Absences in Baltimore City. Absenteeism remains a significant barrier to educational success, particularly for immigrant and refugee students who face distinct challenges in accessing and staying engaged in school. This bill is a critical step in identifying and addressing systemic obstacles that disproportionately affect these students.

The bill’s focus on developing a report with recommendations to improve attendance aligns with MIMA’s mission to advance the well-being of immigrants, especially those who encounter challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and limited access to resources. MIMA looks forward to collaborating with the school system to support the report's development and implementation.

FISCAL IMPACT

MIMA works closely with the school system on issues impacting immigrant and refugee students and their families. If enacted, this bill will not impose any additional fiscal burden on MIMA beyond the allocation of staff time.

AMENDMENTS

MIMA strongly recommends that the study and report specifically address the experiences of immigrant and refugee youth. Contributing factors to absenteeism may include language barriers that prevent families from fully understanding attendance policies, school schedules, and

available support services. Additionally, many immigrant students balance school with work obligations—whether after or during school hours—to support their households. Others take on caregiving responsibilities, particularly in families where parents work multiple jobs with non-traditional hours. Lastly, fear of deportation and the removal of schools as a sensitive location for immigration enforcement have heightened anxiety among students and families, discouraging regular attendance.

For these reasons, the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs supports City Council Bill 25-0002. MIMA stands ready to serve as a resource and provide technical assistance to Baltimore City Public Schools in advancing this effort.