



The Bell Policy Center

Employee Leave Attend Child's Academic Activities

House Bill 16-1002

Testimony to the Senate State, Veterans, & Military Affairs Committee
 Frank Waterous, Ph.D., Senior Policy Analyst
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Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

I am Frank Waterous, senior policy analyst with the Bell Policy Center. The Bell is a non-partisan, nonprofit research and advocacy organization founded on progressive values and dedicated to making Colorado a state of opportunity for all.

The Bell Policy Center supports House Bill 16-1002. The bill reenacts Colorado's parental leave act created by HB 09-1057, which the Bell also supported. By making it possible for more parents to attend parent-teacher conferences and other specified academic activities, the bill serves as an important component in Colorado's efforts to close the state's achievement gaps, reduce the dropout rate and increase the number of students who successfully transition to postsecondary education opportunities.

Parental involvement in children's education is consistently cited as one of the key elements associated with lower dropout rates and increased student achievement. Significantly, given the changing demographics of Colorado's school population, research findings suggest that **parental involvement is the single strongest predictor of Latino academic performance.**¹ Yet women, 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.² To address this situation, several states, including Colorado, have enacted parental leave laws.³

Overall, the evidence clearly indicates that supporting parents' involvement in school-based activities is a key strategy for closing achievement gaps, cutting dropout rates and increasing postsecondary participation. A broad-based research review by the National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools found that students with involved parents were more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs.
- Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits.
- Attend school regularly.
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school.
- Graduate and go on to postsecondary education.⁴

Other research concludes that the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement is not income or social status but the extent to which the student's family is able to:

- Create a home environment that encourages learning.
- Communicate high yet reasonable expectations.
- Become involved in their children's education at school and in the community.⁵

Given the evidence, we strongly believe that providing the opportunity for parents — particularly those from low-income and minority families — to engage in their children's school activities is prudent public policy. As such, the Bell Policy Center supports HB 16-1002 and urges your support, as well.

We thank Senator Kerr for bringing this bill to you today and thank the committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts with you.

If you have any questions, or if I can provide further information, please contact me at (303) 297-0456 or waterous@bellpolicy.org.

Endnotes

¹ See for example Andrew Behnke and Sue Rosman, "Latino Family Engagement: How to Effectively Engage and Connect with Latino Parents and Youth," 2008, <https://sera37.files.wordpress.com/2008/08/teacher-present-final1.ppt> and Axel Lluch, "The New Latino South: Latinos in North Carolina," Governor's Office of Hispanic/Latino Affairs, Oct 2007, http://www.powershow.com/view/9b874-MTk2N/THE_NEW_LATINO_SOUTH_LATINOS_IN_NORTH_CAROLINA_powerpoint_ppt_presentation.

² Heather Boushey, et.al., *Understanding Low-Wage Work in the United States*, The Mobility Agenda and the Center for Economic Policy and Research, March 2007, <http://www.inclusionist.org/files/lowwagework.pdf> and "Facts about Low Wage Work," Fairness Initiative on Low Wage Work, <http://www.lowwagework.org/facts-about-low-wage-work.html#Overview>.

³ "Leave for Parental Involvement in School Activities," National Partnership for Women & Families, Updated July 2009, <http://go.nationalpartnership.org/site/DocServer/schoolactivities20-2006.pdf?docID=1053>.

⁴ Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002, <http://www.sedl.org/connections/research-syntheses.html>.

⁵ "Effective Strategies: Family Engagement," National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, Clemson University, <http://dropoutprevention.org/effective-strategies/family-engagement/>.