



Assembly Bill 461: More, Not Less Help for Children and Families Act of 2025

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill (AB) 461 ensures that families facing school attendance challenges receive the support they need, rather than punishment. By eliminating harmful penalties—such as fines of up to \$2,000 and jail time of up to one year—it removes barriers that push families deeper into hardship. Instead of criminalization, this bill paves the way for families and children to be offered more help, not less.

BACKGROUND

Current law criminalizes parents of children six and older for school attendance issues, imposing fines and jail time instead of offering support. [Recent changes to state law](#) have eliminated the use of fear-based tactics, such as notifying parents or guardians of fines or jail time due to unexcused absences. However, without removing the penalties, the law continues to criminalize families rather than empowering them with the resources and support needed to address attendance challenges. A 2013 Attorney General [truancy report](#) found most district attorneys rarely prosecuted these cases, as early intervention strategies proved highly effective. Since that 2013 report, there has been [no updated statewide data](#) on how many truancy cases result in parental criminal charges. In 2025, new threats—like immigration raids, bullying, and reduced protections for vulnerable students based on race or sexual preference—further complicate attendance, forcing families into impossible choices.

Parents and children should not be punished further by California laws crafted decades ago. Now is the time to revisit our policies to offer more help, not less.

SOLUTION

AB 461 follows the evidence that families struggling to support their children are better off when their government reaches out a hand rather than close a door. It will do this by:

- Repealing the Penal Code mandating jail time and a fine of up to \$2,000 for a family whose child is failing to meet attendance goals; and,
- Retaining Education Code which establish processes for educators and community leaders to meet with and hold parents accountable when their children are not attending school regularly.

SUPPORT

End Child Poverty California/GRACE (Sponsor)
SEIU California (Sponsor)
Western Center on Law and Poverty (Sponsor)
Asian Americans Advancing Justice Southern California
Back to the Start
Black Women for Wellness Action Project
Bridges of Hope California
California Attorneys for Criminal Justice
California for Safety and Justice
California Partnership to End Domestic Violence
California State PTA
California State Treasurer
Californians United for a Responsible Budget
California Welfare Directors Association
Child Care Law Center
Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice
County Welfare Directors Association of California
Courage California
Debt Free Justice California
Disability Rights California
Drug Policy Alliance

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
End Poverty in California
Initiate Justice
Justice2Jobs Coalition
La Defensa
Mission Economic Development Agency
Parent Voices California
Project Student Parents Are Reimagining CalWORKs
Rubicon Programs
Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition
Smart Justice California
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center
The Children's Partnership
Vera Institute of Justice
Youth Justice Education Clinic—Loyola Law School's Center
for Juvenile Law and Policy