



Education Committee – Introduced

TJ Foley
Amiah Gooding
Ethan Lowder
Mickey Sloat
Nina Yu

Increase Legal School Dropout Age Position

By Lowder

Contact: Ethan Lowder | Cedar Rapids, IA | lowderep@gmail.com

Position Statement:

The State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council supports legislation increasing the State of Iowa's legal school dropout age from the current 16 to 17.

Position

It is the Position of the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council that legislation to revise Iowa Code 299.1A to increase the State of Iowa's legal school dropout age from the current 16 to 17 will empower students to stay in school, to graduate and to change their futures.

Rationale

Legislators will see clear advantages, not only for the students who graduate from high school and earn their diploma, but also for their families and for the economic prosperity of our entire State.

First, while Iowa is one of the top States in the Nation in high school graduation rates, trends show that for the past decade one in ten Iowa seniors fail to complete high school in four years, this number was 3,650 students in 2012. Most states passed school attendance laws in the late 1700's and into the early 1900's; the law was started in a time when kids left school early to help parents on the farm. While Iowa remains an agricultural State, what has changed are the types of skills demanded in the workplace and competition that is now international rather than national.

Secondly, those who do not graduate high school will often later be low-wage and low-skill workers or end up within Iowa's social service programs. The economic consequences for the student of dropping out are dramatic. Education pays! In the U.S., high school graduates earn over \$500,000 more over their lifetime than individuals without a high school diploma and research has shown a 10 percent rise in earnings for people who simply stay in school one year longer. Today, half of a high school education is no longer enough; they must finish the learning that is required to obtain a skill set that will lead to success in employment that will provide a livable wage. Not completing high school puts the future of the student, their families, and even our State at risk.

Most importantly, many of those students who drop out at 16 are already the most at risk students in our state. They often don't have support at home, their parents likely did not graduate high school, they may already be facing difficulty in school and they find it easy to just drop out at age 16 instead of staying to graduate. As such, we know increasing the legal age from 16 to 17 must be done with supportive dropout prevention and retention programs along with the necessary financial resources to create an effective and comprehensive approach. SIYAC has prepared and can provide a white paper on this position that further delves into the supports and challenges with this initiative.

Recommended Action

SIYAC encourages the General Assembly to change Iowa Code 299.1A to increase the legal drop out age to 17. We owe it to the future of our children and our State to do all we can to ensure every child in Iowa at minimum graduates from high school. The value to the students, their families and our State by increasing the legal drop out age is immeasurable.