



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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GOVERNOR

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June 21, 2013

Dear School Board Chair:

Beginning June 25, you have an unparalleled opportunity to offer students in your district a better future, while at the same time strengthening your community's workforce and families – all by taking a single, simple vote. June 25 is the first date that school boards may begin adopting a new policy of requiring students to remain in school through their 18th birthdays. This new "graduation age" will provide myriad benefits to your students and to our Commonwealth.

The days of dropping out of high school and expecting a dependable, well-paying job are long gone. If the high school dropouts of 2009 had graduated, Kentucky's economy would have an additional \$4.2 billion in wages over those students' lifetimes.

In addition to earning higher wages, research shows that high school graduates live longer, are less likely to be teen parents and are more likely to raise healthier, better-educated children. Studies also show that high school graduates are less likely to commit crimes, rely on government healthcare or use other public services.

Over the past five years, we have worked with First Lady Jane Beshear, education leaders and legislators across the state to prevent our high school students from dropping out. During the 2013 legislative session, the hard work paid off with the passage of the dropout prevention bill, Senate Bill 97 (SB 97). This legislation phases in an increase in the compulsory school attendance age from 16 to 18, amending the school attendance law created in 1934.

The adoption of SB 97 is voluntary until 55 percent (or 96) of the state's school districts adopt the policy. Once 96 districts have approved the change, the remaining districts must adopt and implement the policy within two years. Our hope is that we will have 100 percent voluntary adoption of the policy.

June 25 marks Day One of our **"Blitz to 96"** – our statewide push to reach the 55 percent threshold that will create the statewide attendance age standard. The first districts to adopt the policy in the **"Blitz to 96"** will be invited to Frankfort for a special news conference with the Governor and Commissioner to recognize them for their swift action.

We hope your district will be among the first to make this common sense update. Early adoption gives notice to rising freshmen of this important change, and gives school and district staffs time to plan for its successful implementation. Adopting early also sends a strong message to your community that completing high school is essential to ensuring that every student graduates college- and career-ready.

We will no longer allow our students to fall behind because they did not graduate from high school. We look forward to moving our Kentucky students ahead with your help and the help of your entire board with whom we hope you will share this letter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Steven L. Beshear in black ink.

Steven L. Beshear
Governor

Handwritten signature of Terry Holliday in black ink.

Terry Holliday
Commissioner of Education

Enclosure