

RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING SEPTEMBER 2020 AS “ATTENDANCE AWARENESS MONTH” IN ALABAMA

WHEREAS, the Alabama State Board of Education and the Alabama State Department of Education are committed to dedicating resources and attention to reducing chronic absenteeism rates, starting as early as kindergarten, since good attendance is essential to student achievement and graduation; and

WHEREAS, chronic absence is now a required reporting metric under the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act*; and

WHEREAS, the Alabama State Department of Education has developed guidelines in support of consistency for school attendance to assist school systems; and

WHEREAS, chronic absence is defined as missing 18 or more days of school for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences, or just two or three days a month, which is a proven predictor of academic trouble and dropout rates; and

WHEREAS, the definition of attendance has expanded “beyond the classroom” to include virtual and remote learning; and

WHEREAS, improving student attendance and reducing chronic absences takes commitment, collaboration, and tailored approaches to challenges and strengths in each community; and

WHEREAS, the impact of chronic absence hits low-income students and children of color particularly hard if they do not have the resources to make up for lost time in the classroom, making them more likely to face systemic barriers regarding getting to school; and

WHEREAS, chronic absence exacerbates the achievement gap that separates low-income students from their peers; and

WHEREAS, student absenteeism undermines efforts to improve struggling schools since it is hard to measure improvement in classroom instruction if students are not engaged to benefit from instruction; and

WHEREAS, schools and communities must do more to identify, analyze, project, and share data on how many students are chronically absent so that appropriate interventions are matched with the needs of the students; and

WHEREAS, *Alabama Literacy Act #2019-523* concentrates on systematic efforts to improve the reading skills of all public-school students in early literacy so that every student is reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade; and

WHEREAS, Campaign Grade Level Reading brings state agencies and organizations together to focus on one goal, Grade 3 reading proficiency, by enhancing school readiness, preventing chronic absenteeism, modernizing the Alabama Reading Initiative, increasing summer learning opportunities for P-3 students, and improving childhood health; and

WHEREAS, chronic absence can be significantly reduced when schools, parents, and communities work together to monitor and promote good attendance and address hurdles that keep children from getting to school; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Alabama State Board of Education does hereby proclaim that Alabama schools will stand with the nation in recognizing September as “Attendance Awareness Month” and is hereby committed to focusing on reducing chronic absenteeism so that all children have an equitable opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive academically, emotionally, and socially.

Done this 10th day of September 2020

