



## Support HB 763: Adding School Climate Improvement to Duties of School Attendance Committees

HB 763 would add improving school climate review to the responsibilities of the student attendance committees that currently exist in every county. We urge your support for this legislation for the following reasons:

### Focusing on School Climate Will Lead to Better Outcomes for Students

- School climate has been shown to influence grade point average (GPA), standardized test scores, reading levels, academic writing, and school adjustment.<sup>1</sup>
- School climate has also been associated with reduced occurrences of student misbehavior such as drug use, aggression, antisocial behavior, absences and suspensions, school violence, internalizing and externalizing behavior problems, and student delinquency.<sup>2</sup>
- The Georgia Department of Education's focus on school climate change efforts has seen a 3.1% reduction in the state out-of-school suspension (OSS) rate since 2008, representing over 47,000 fewer students receiving OSS and over 119,000 fewer disciplinary incidents.<sup>3</sup>
- Additionally in Georgia, as school climate star rating increases, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency increases as well. In fact, there is over a 30% difference in reading performance between one star and five star climate rated schools.

### Focusing on School Climate Leads to Better Performance by Schools

- Research has found that schools with positive school climates tend to have better test scores and graduation rates; in contrast, schools with negative school climates as a result of unsafe or hostile environments tend to have lower academic performance.<sup>4</sup>
- Several national studies have shown that schools with higher suspension rates tend to have lower academic performance, poorer school climate ratings, and lower graduation rates.<sup>5</sup>
- In Georgia, Department of Education data shows that as school climate star scores increase, so does performance on the College and Career Ready Performance Index. In fact, there is over a twenty-point difference between those schools with the lowest school climate star rating and those schools with the highest CCRPI Score.

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Caldarella, P., Shatzer, R. H., Gray, K. M., Young, K. R., & Young, E. L. (2011). The effects of school-wide positive behavior support on middle school climate and student outcomes. *RMLE Online*, 35(4), 1-14.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> GA DOE data shared with GA Appleseed via agreement.

<sup>4</sup> Thapa, Amrit, Jonathan Cohen, Shawn Guffey, and Ann Higgins-D'Alessandro. 2013. "A Review of School Climate Research." *Review of Educational Research* 83(3): 357-385.

<sup>5</sup> Shollenberger, T. L. (2015). Racial disparities in school suspension and subsequent outcomes. *Closing the school discipline gap: Equitable remedies for excessive exclusion*, 31-44.