Resolution: To support enhanced responses to chronic absenteeism and truancy

PURPOSE: For the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group of the District of Columbia (JJAG) to support the provision of increased resources to schools and the implementation of enhancements at schools to attract and improve student attendance and engagement, as well as enhance community-based resources that respond to youth who are disconnected from schools.

WHEREAS: The JJAG provides active consultation to the Mayor and government agencies to ensure the provision of comprehensive delinquency prevention programs and programs designed to reduce status offense behaviors that meet the needs of youth through the collaboration of many local systems with which a youth may interface.

WHEREAS: The JJAG provided the Mayor with a report and a set of recommendations for improvement of our local responses to status offense behaviors in February 2020, including enhanced prevention and off-ramp opportunities. The JJAG report, titled “Create New Opportunities for Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) to Succeed Without Legal System Intervention” (PINS Report) proposes removing the juvenile justice system as a possible response to status offense behaviors, such as truancy, and strengthening a community-based set of services to meet the needs of youth and families.

WHEREAS: The JJAG supports investments and enhancements that align with the PINS Report and its recommendations, including the provision of increased resources that enhance responses to chronic absenteeism and truancy.

THEREFORE: Be it resolved that the JJAG supports the provision of increased resources to schools and community-based resources that are aligned with the PINS report and recommendations, including enhancements that improve responses to chronic absenteeism and truancy, such as providing:

1. School-based personnel responsible for coordinating supports for youth and families experiencing attendance and truancy issues. These resources should be: (1) independent of existing social work and mental health staff (not supplanting); (2) not utilized to provide academic instruction or direct supervision to students; (3) trained in strengths-based facilitation, positive youth development, cultural humility, and trauma-informed practices; and (4) responsible for referring youth and families to appropriate resources that effectively mitigating challenges to educational engagement;
2. Tools that are designed to attract and retain student attendance and effectively engage youth and families, such as expanded use of technology, trainings, physical spaces, and extracurricular activities, and
3. Additional resources to the community and community-based organizations that support youth who are disconnected from schools, such as street outreach teams, non-law enforcement mobile responses, or community-based hubs staffed by trained youth advocates.