**Proclamation of September 2021 as Attendance Awareness Month**

**WHEREAS** good attendance is even more essential to student achievement and graduation because of the lost opportunities to learning that have been and are occurring as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic,

**WHEREAS** taking attendance daily in a consistent manner and for different types of learning opportunities (remote or in-person) is essential to identifying when students begin to miss too much school,

**WHEREAS** taking a positive problem-solving approach to reducing absenteeism requires expanding data to include reviewing chronic absence and attendance data for in-person and remote learning, availability of working contact information for families, connectivity (devices and internet), and positive relationships,

**WHEREAS** promoting attendance requires noticing - as soon as possible - when students are starting to miss too much school in order to engage students and families, identify and offer needed support and early intervention resources,

**WHEREAS** ensuring an equal opportunity to learn requires using data to detect inequitable patterns of absenteeism and missed opportunities to learn by school, grade, and student population,

**WHEREAS** research indicates that monitoring when students miss 10% of school whether in-person or remote can help to identify students and families as well as schools in need of outreach and additional support,

**WHEREAS** improving attendance and reducing absenteeism takes schools, families and community partners working together to identify and address factors contributing to students missing school, particularly a lack of digital access, mental and physical health services and access to basic economic supports including food and housing.

**WHEREAS** schools play a key role in ensuring equitable access to educational supports such as safe places to learn, reliable nutrition, physical/occupational/speech therapy, mental health services, health services, and opportunities for physical activity, in under-resourced communities;

**WHEREAS** partnering with students and families to monitor attendance as well as understand and address barriers to attendance requires building and sustaining caring relationships and regular communications in the home language spoken by families,

**WHEREAS** the critical role that families play in supporting student learning is even more essential when schools must adapt and shift learning modes throughout the year in response to local conditions related to public health or other environmental challenges

WHEREAS students are more likely to attend when these four conditions for learning – physical and emotional health and safety; a sense of belonging, connection and support; academic challenge and engagement; and adults and peers with social emotional competency – are in place. Chronic absence alerts schools, community partners and families that one or more positive conditions for learning are not in place.

**WHEREAS** reducing absenteeism requires taking a comprehensive approach that begins with prevention and early intervention, and adopting trauma-informed approaches rather than responding with punitive action,

**WHEREAS** the impact of absenteeism and biased approaches to school discipline expands the achievement gap that separates students living in low-income communities and many students of color (Black, Hispanic, Native American and Pacific Islanders) from their peers, particularly if they don’t have resources to make up for lost learning time and face systemic barriers to showing up, which have been further exacerbated by the economic and health impacts of Covid-19,

**WHEREAS** schools and districts must do more to track, calculate and share data so that we can evaluate whether learning opportunities are accessible for all students and assess whether attendance supports are making a difference,

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_stands with the nation in recognizing September as “Attendance Awareness Month.” We hereby commit to focusing on absenteeism and addressing the factors that cause students to miss school (whether offered at a distance, in-person or a blend) in order to ensure all children an equitable opportunity to learn, grow and thrive academically, emotionally and socially. We recognize that we must work together to engage students and families and send the message that learning can and must continue, whether students participate in person, remotely or through blended approaches.

Specifically, we will: (Please add in the specific commitments that reflect what your district/state department or city is willing to do. Below are possible examples that can be tailored to your realities.)

1. Make clear that improving student attendance, including taking daily attendance in a consistent manner and monitoring absenteeism, continues to be a top priority.

2. Use an expanded set of data, (including analyzing attendance and participation in in-person and remote learning, digital access, availability of working contact information and relationships to school staff), to monitor outcomes for different populations of students, raise public awareness, establish goals, allocate resources, track progress and assure accountability for an equal opportunity to learn.

3. Engage students, families, educators and the broader community – including civic and elected leaders, local businesses, clergy members and nonprofit organizations – in working together to identify barriers to getting to school (whether lessons are remote or in-person) and develop meaningful solutions that ensure all children and youth keep learning despite the challenges of Covid-19.

4. Ensure access to learning by promoting universal access to internet and computer devices to all students and school staff.

5. Use chronic absence data, along with other indicators, to identify where the instructional losses are occurring, and invest additional resources in schools and school-related programs, including tutoring, expanded learning, community schools strategies and health services.