

## RESOLUTION NO. 111-12

### RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA, CALL TO ACTION TO REDUCE CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM IN OUR NATION'S SCHOOLS

---

**WHEREAS**, cities across the country are grappling with the harsh reality that as many as one in four students are missing nearly a month or more of school, putting them at risk of academic failure and dropping out; and

**WHEREAS**, chronic absence – missing 10 percent or more of school for any reason including excused and unexcused absences – is a proven predictor of academic trouble and dropout rates; and

**WHEREAS**, few students who are chronically absent in both kindergarten and first grade can read at grade level by the end of third grade. Improving attendance in the early grades is therefore a core pillar of the comprehensive strategy adopted by the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading for ensuring that children learn to read by the end of third grade so they can read to learn in later grades; and

**WHEREAS**, by the sixth grade, chronic absenteeism is highly predictive of which students will drop out of high school. By the ninth grade, attendance is a better predictor of graduation than eighth grade test scores; and

**WHEREAS**, chronic absenteeism rates are highest in low-income communities, where school offers students the best opportunity for improved life outcomes; and

**WHEREAS**, chronic absenteeism undermines efforts to improve school performance and to narrow the achievement gap, because improvements in classroom instruction have little impact if students are not in class to benefit from them; and

**WHEREAS**, chronic absence affects all students, even those who show up regularly, when teachers must spend time reviewing concepts for students who missed lessons; and

**WHEREAS**, chronic absenteeism is a flag that something is wrong in a child's life – providing an opportunity to intervene before it is too late; it is also a public safety issue. Kids who are on the streets instead of at their desks are at an elevated risk of being the victim of a crime, or arrested on juvenile justice charges. In New York City, 79 percent of juveniles arrested had been chronically absent prior to their arrest; and

**WHEREAS**, most cities do not know if chronic absence is a problem because most districts do not use their attendance data to calculate this attendance indicator. They monitor only average daily attendance and unexcused absences (truancy) and both can mask high levels of chronic absence; and

**WHEREAS**, cities are in an excellent position to call for data showing whether chronic absence is a problem. In New York City, one in five students—more than 200,000 young people—missed 20 days or more of school last year. In Providence, chronic absence affects over 37 percent of its student population. In Oregon, 21 percent of students in rural, urban and suburban communities are chronically absent; and

**WHEREAS**, we do not currently have an accurate chronic absenteeism rate for Richmond, but have reason to believe it is a serious barrier to reading proficiency, as in other cities; and

**WHEREAS**, what we do know is that one reason children in Richmond miss school is due to asthma and the County Health Department has recommended several strategies for reducing absences due to asthma; and

**WHEREAS**, California spends approximately \$7,570 per student per year, thus the absenteeism cost our Richmond schools hundreds of thousands of dollars; and

**WHEREAS**, cities can leverage their own resources to identify and implement strategies that address key barriers to school attendance, such as little access to health services, poor transportation, unsafe neighborhoods, unstable housing and lack of awareness about the importance of going to school regularly starting in the early grades; and

**WHEREAS**, we applaud the exemplary leadership of Mayor Bloomberg and his administration for demonstrating the critical role that cities can play in combating chronic absence, improving student attendance and increasing instructional time. In less than two years, the Mayor’s Interagency Task Force on Truancy, Chronic Absenteeism and School Engagement has impacted chronic absence levels in target schools—giving students who benefited from the program last year an additional 7,000 days of school. Key components of effective practice illustrated by New York City’s Task Force include:

- Data sharing among key stakeholders and strategic use of “early warning” data to identify and prevent chronic absence and school failure;
- Personalizing school through the creation of the largest in-school mentoring program in the nation—targeting over 4,000 at-risk students, by “repurposing” existing resources and partnerships;
- Cultivation of a culture of attendance and its importance through public messaging, awareness-building activities and attendance incentives;
- Rigorous infrastructure and data-driven accountability aimed at creating scalable models for future implementation both in NYC and nationwide;
- Creating systemic models to better connect existing local resources and community stakeholders with schools; and

**WHEREAS**, we endorse and support the efforts by the 124 cities, of which Richmond is one, involved in the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading All-America City Award process to address chronic absence in the early grades along with reducing summer learning loss and increasing school readiness. The Campaign is dedicated to improving early literacy by supporting community solutions to these three widespread, but solvable challenges. Addressing attendance offers cities a chance to use the bully pulpit to educate parents and community members about the importance of regular attendance among young children, bring together community stakeholders around an issue of common concern, and monitor progress over time;

**WHEREAS**, we thank the Richmond Community Foundation, along with Building Blocks for Kids, First 5, the West Contra Costa County Unified School District, the West Contra Costa Public Education Foundation (the Ed Fund), the Richmond Public Library, and many other organizations for their collaboration. We join with them in identifying and supporting attendance strategies and improving reading and learning abilities for our children; and

**WHEREAS**, The U.S. Conference of Mayors adopted a similar resolution to this at their 80th Annual Conference of Mayors on June 15, 2012 in Orlando, Florida; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Richmond City Council supports the creation of initiatives to reduce chronic absenteeism, including to:

- Raise public awareness and concern about the dire impact of chronic absence;
- Encourage broad community engagement and sustained civic action to help parents get their children to school every day;
- Encourage schools to publish chronic absenteeism data, along with average daily attendance.

I certify that the foregoing Resolution was passed and adopted by the Members of the City Council of the City of Richmond at a regular meeting held on September 18, 2012, by the following vote:

AYES: Councilmembers Bates, Beckles, Boozé, Butt, Ritterman, Vice Mayor Rogers, and Mayor McLaughlin.

NOES: None.

ABSTENTIONS: None.

ABSENT: None.

DIANE HOLMES  
CLERK OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND

(SEAL)

Approved:

GAYLE MCLAUGHLIN  
Mayor

Approved as to form:

BRUCE GOODMILLER  
City Attorney

State of California            }  
County of Contra Costa        }        : ss.  
City of Richmond               }

I certify that the foregoing is a true copy of Resolution No. 111-12, finally passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of Richmond at a regular meeting held on September 18, 2012.