



## Text File

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**Committee:** Committee on Finance and Law

**Status:** Passed Finally

Resolution Establishing a Pittsburgh City-School District Partnership.

**Whereas**, systemic racism is the pre-existing condition which afforded Covid-19 the opportunity to disproportionately impact the African-American community. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”), African-Americans make up 13% of the U.S. population, but represent 33% of Covid-19 hospitalizations and 34% of Covid-19 deaths. In counties with predominantly African-American residents, infection rates are three times higher, and death rates six times higher than rates in counties with predominantly Non-Hispanic White residents; and,

**Whereas**, due to systemic racism, African-Americans disproportionately face conditions that increase their exposure to Covid-19, making social distancing challenging, including employment in essential industries, reliance on public transit, overrepresentation in correctional facilities and crowded, substandard housing. African-Americans are more likely to be underinsured, receive lower-quality healthcare, live in food deserts and be exposed to indoor and outdoor environmental toxins, all of which are linked to underlying health conditions that heighten the risk both of contracting Covid-19 and suffering severe symptoms; and,

**Whereas**, African-American families are facing more severe economic consequences. Due to occupational segregation, a disproportionate number of African-Americans are in low-wage jobs and have incomes below the poverty line, leaving them more financially vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19. With unemployment at an unprecedented high, 45% of African-American workers have lost their jobs or had their hours reduced, which is 14% more than Non-Hispanic White workers. Consequently, African-American families are overrepresented among families experiencing food insecurity, difficulty paying bills and housing instability; and,

**Whereas**, African-American children face disadvantages in remote learning settings. Pre-existing disparities in access to adequate internet connections and computer technology are being exacerbated by a shift to remote learning during the pandemic that place Black children at a further disadvantage. African-American parents have concerns about accessing resources or supplies to keep their children on track academically. Results of a survey conducted in April with parents in Texas, New York, California, and Washington show that one in five African-American parents received little to no information from their school about remote learning resources during the pandemic. Responses from a survey conducted in March 2020 show that 25% of African-American youth connected with teachers less than once per week. Further, African-American parents disproportionately represent essential workers who are unable to work from home and, thus, less able to provide parental academic supervision and support necessary for remote learning; and,

**Whereas**, African-American children are experiencing elevated levels of stress. African-American children are particularly vulnerable to the psychological effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Seventy-four percent (74%) of

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African-American youth are worried about the effect Covid-19 may have on their family's finances. Seventy-one percent (71%) of African-American youth are worried that they or a family member will be exposed to the virus. Stressors related to Covid-19 are compounded by recent race-related traumas involving the disproportionate impact of police brutality on African-Americans and communities. Increased stress is intensified by social distancing, which disrupts daily routines and reduces contact with relatives, peers, and adult role models who can provide much-needed support. Similarly, African-American youth are disproportionately exposed to family deaths, and the rates of loss are being exacerbated by Covid-19. Further, the loss of loved ones to Covid-19 is often rapid, unexpected, and social distancing disrupts families' ability to grieve; and,

**Whereas**, the twin public health crises of Covid-19 and the resulting school closures and institutional racism which has fueled the educational achievement gap have combined to create an educational emergency in the City and School District of Pittsburgh. This emergency will have long-term negative consequences for families in the City and the District but will disproportionately affect the health and safety of the city's African-American families in particular; and,

**Whereas**, the Pennsylvania Department of Education, in Summer 2020, declared that it considers the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19), declared by the World Health Organization ("WHO") a global pandemic, an emergency within the meaning of the Pennsylvania Public School Code of 1949; and,

**Whereas**, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, in October 2020, concluded that, "while there have been evidence that the PPS is attempting to close the achievement gap between its African American and White children, the statics do not support a conclusion that the standard of substantial progress has been satisfied."; and,

**Whereas**, the overwhelming majority of the students of the Pittsburgh Public Schools had limited in-person instruction during Covid-19 pandemic; and,

**Whereas**, the CDC reported, in November 2020, that mental health-related emergency room visits for children aged 5-11 ad 12-17 increased 24% and 31%, respectively between April 2020 and October 2020 as compared with the same time period from the previous year; and,

**Whereas**, educational outcomes and mental health outcomes for all schoolchildren have worsened due to the pandemic, but educational outcomes for African-American children in the school district were already negative before the pandemic, and have only been exacerbated by the pandemic and now have risen to a crisis-level emergency; and,

**Whereas**, Pedro A. Noguera, Ph.D., Dean of the USC Rossier School of Education, in a recent report, stated that, "The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the preexisting inequalities we knew were there: the digital divide, the lack of a social safety net, and the fact that the parents of many school children are out of work and at risk to contracting the virus because they are "essential workers."; and,

**Whereas**, schoolchildren of the School District of Pittsburgh lost, by August of 2021, nearly two (2) years of

school. The remediation necessary to address this lost time for all District pupils will be extensive, and expensive, and eliminating the racial achievement gap for African-American students in addition to this will be a monumental task; and,

**Whereas**, the late Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, Thurgood Marshall, when, as a staff attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, re-argued the *Brown v. Board of Education* case before the United States Supreme Court, in 1953, said, “children . . . are guaranteed by the states some twelve years of education”, and additionally argued that, “There is no way to repay lost school years.”; and,

**Whereas**, considering the emotional trauma and increased learning gap caused by the pandemic and the pre-existing racial achievement gap, there exists an educational emergency among the students in the Pittsburgh Schools.

**Whereas**, it will take no less than a City-wide coordinated, dedicated and sustained multi-year effort to address the emotional trauma and learning gap caused by the pandemic and the pre-existing racial achievement gap.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH HEREBY ENACTS AS FOLLOWS:**

**Section 1.** The City of Pittsburgh does hereby establish the **Pittsburgh City-School District Partnership** to coordinate policies and practices that create opportunity-rich places where young people can be successful in and out of school.

**Section 2.** The goals of the Pittsburgh City-School District Partnership are to:

1. Increase positive family outcomes including student achievement;
2. Increase school and community safety;
3. Create healthier communities where families and students can thrive

**Section 3.** The Members of the Pittsburgh City-School District Partnership includes: The Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh, The President of City Council and no more than 3 additional Councilmembers appointed by City Council President, the City Controller, The Superintendent of the School District of Pittsburgh, The President of the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education and no more than three additional Board members appointed by President of the Board. The Partnership will be co-convened by the Presidents of City Council and the Board of Public Education. The Partnership may add ex-officio members as needed and/or create subject-matter advisory committees.

**Section 4.** The Pittsburgh City-School District Partnership initial agenda will include:

1. **School safety:** Additional community-based supports in the high schools to address the violence in public and charter high schools. There are three aspects to this engagement: 1. community-based leaders that have relationships with children and families in the school every day to build relationships with staff and students and provide insight into the dynamics of who's causing the violence in the schools (led by the city's Group Violence Initiative). 2. Diversionary supports that can work with students who get suspended so that they can identify root causes of student violence and provide initial intake. 3.

Mental health services that can support families and students with therapy and support.

**2. Emergency childcare** - as schools close in a rolling fashion, there is no backup childcare that is available beyond neighbor and family care. City recreation centers and community-based programs can work together to offer emergency childcare neighborhood by neighborhood when schools close. Additionally, qualified community partners could be funded to also offer slots for families in need so that children can have a safe place to go to do online school.

**3. Summer and afterschool:** Children need safe and engaging activities in the summer. Summer BOOST already engages community organizations to support summer activities. Learn and Earn is one of the largest city programs to support teens. A more intentional set of partnerships and planning could help address the staffing shortages in community-based programs and guarantee more kids slots in out of school programs.

**4. Universal early childcare and education:** Invest additional resources to shore up our early care system to allow every child a place in an ever-improving sector. Devise a plan that provides fully universal early childcare as a city and that honors the work of small neighborhood-based providers.

**5. Transportation:** Chronic absence in the City is over 42% right now. Transportation is a part of that story. How can the City, Port Authority, and the schools work together to reduce transportation gaps for students and provide additional supports that ensure students are in school every school day.