

2011 Legislative Agenda for Children & Families in Chatham County



Issue #1:

Support extending the school dropout age to 17.

Concerns:

- ◆ Research shows a 10% rise in earnings for people who stay in school one year longer¹.
- ◆ The unemployment rate for individuals who have not graduated from high school is 65% higher than for graduates².
- ◆ Approximately \$10 billion could be saved annually in public health costs if all our students graduated from high school³.

Issue #2:

Support a rewrite of the Juvenile Code.

Concerns:

- ◆ Georgia's current juvenile code has changed so much that it is now extremely difficult to read and understand⁴.
- ◆ A juvenile code rewrite provides the opportunity to enact reforms such as: dovetailing, rather than delineating, between juvenile cases to allow same judge to hear all proceedings related to a child/family; delineating between delinquency and deprivation cases; and providing legal representation for children in state custody⁴.

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Issue #3:

There needs to be state funding directed towards the 0-3 year old population

Concerns:

- ◆ Georgia's current state lottery system funds the Pre-K population (age 4).
- ◆ Quality child care programs promote children's intellectual, language, and social development, yet most children do not have access to high-quality programs because their parents can't afford them⁵.
- ◆ Much of a child's cognitive, motor skills, language, social, and emotional development starts during the early years and needs to be properly influenced to get them on the right path for pre-k and kindergarten.

Issue #4:

Support year-round schooling.

Concerns:

- ◆ Remediation needs can be addressed throughout the year as opposed to only during summer programs⁶.
- ◆ Families having difficulty paying for child care expenses could benefit⁶.
- ◆ Continuity of instruction can help improve student achievement⁷.
- ◆ A multi-track school year can provide a solution to school overcrowding, and may also be more cost-effective for some school districts⁷.

Data Sources:

- ¹ C.D. Howe Institute
- ² Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor (March 2007)
- ³ Education Next, Hoover Institute (March 2007)
- ⁴ Daily Report (September 25, 2009)
- ⁵ Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development (February 2004)
- ⁶ About.com: Child Parenting
- ⁷ EducationBug