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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact Information:

Ashley Heffernan
Ashley@TriCountyCradleToCareer.org
910-465-7864

TCCC applauds changes to state's "Disturbing Schools" law

Educators urged to exhaust all avenues of behavioral discipline before involving law enforcement

North Charleston, SC – Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative (TCCC) is pleased that South Carolina lawmakers have amended the "Disturbing Schools" law, which criminalized students for actions that often could have been handled by school administrators.

Gov. Henry McMaster [signed legislation](#) on May 17 that restructures the law to apply only to non-students. The law now reads, "It is unlawful for a person who is not a student to willfully interfere with, disrupt or disturb the normal operations of a school or college in this state."

Previously, students who were deemed too loud or disruptive could be arrested and charged with disturbing school. Through the abuse and misuse of this law, a disproportionate number of students of color and with disabilities were affected. Research from the U.S. Department of Education ([.pdf](#)) found that "Black students are 2.2 times as likely to receive a referral to law enforcement or be subject to a school-related arrest as white students."

"Compounded with insufficient resources for mental health, this law made it too easy for teachers and administrators to call in law enforcement officers instead of finding alternate methods for addressing unacceptable behavior," TCCC CEO John C. Read said. "Amending this law is an important step in the right direction toward equitable treatment of all students. It is important for school districts to train teachers and administrators to manage student behavior in a way that doesn't involve the judicial system."

With a criminal record, instead of detention, suspension or some other form of discipline, students are put at a disadvantage before graduating from high school and are limited in their future education and career opportunities.

"Our vision is for every child in the tri-county region to graduate from high school prepared for either further education or a career in the modern workforce," said Anita Zucker, CEO of The InterTech Group and chair of the TCCC Board of Directors. "Urging educators to exhaust all avenues of behavioral discipline before involving law enforcement will keep more of our students in the classroom and committed to success."

About the Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative

The Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative (TCCC) is a community-wide movement in Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester counties, South Carolina, focused on improving the quality of life of its citizens and its workforce through education. Using data and focused community collaboration across a continuum from "cradle-to-career," TCCC serves as a catalyst for widespread, systemic change, with the ultimate goal of increased success and economic prosperity for all.

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www.TriCountyCradleToCareer.org

6296 Rivers Avenue, Suite 308 | North Charleston, SC 29406 | 843.732.8222