SOUTH

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS **SOUTHERN OFFICE**

Georgia Senate Study Committee on Combating Absenteeism in Schools

CSG South Presentation

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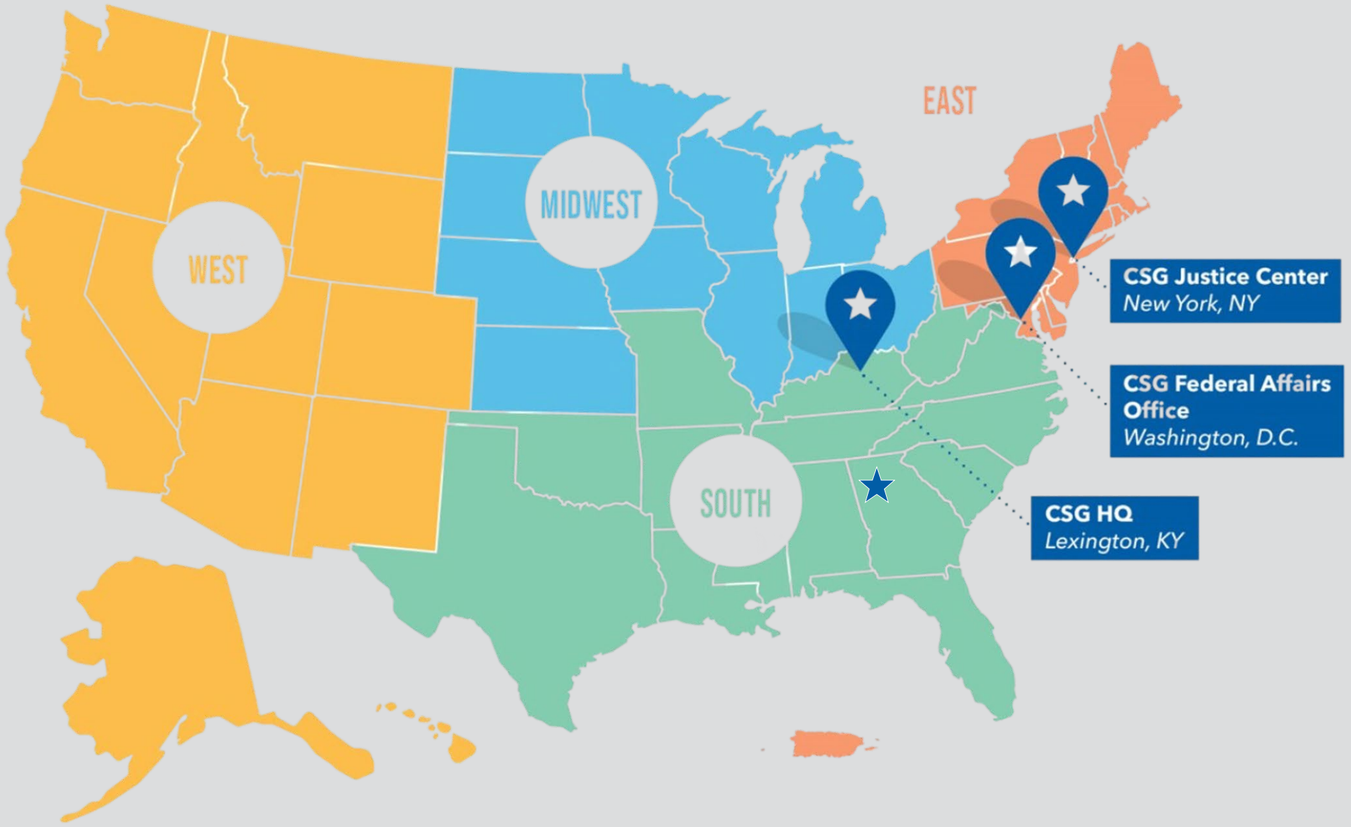
CSG 101:
A REGIONALLY-BASED NATIONAL ORGANIZATION



- Founded in 1933 by Colorado State Senator Henry Wolcott Toll
- Serves all three Branches of State Government
- Nonpartisan/Not for Profit 501(c)(3)
- $58 Million Budget
- 300+ Employees
- Four Strong Regions
  - **CSG South**
  - CSG East
  - CSG Midwest
  - CSG West
- 56 Member States & Territories
- Justice Center
- 11 Affiliated Organizations

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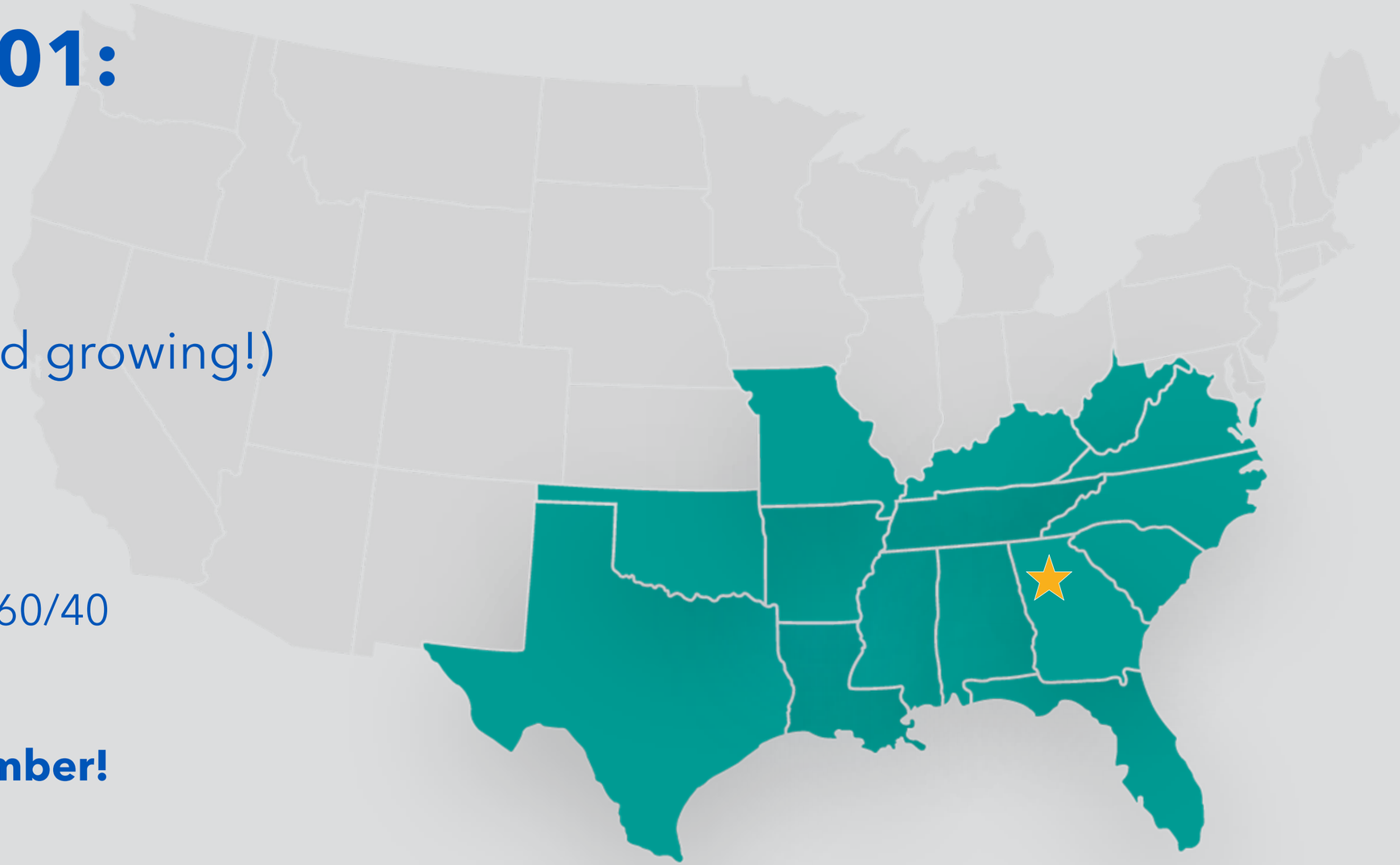
CSG SOUTH 101:

- Established in 1947
- Executive Committee
- 15 Southern States
- 13 Staff Members (and growing!)
  - Policy & Research
  - Programs & Marketing
  - Events & Admin
- Funding
  - State Appropriations – 60/40
  - Private Sector
  - Grants & Foundations
  - **You are already a member!**



CSG SOUTH: POLICY RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

- **Six Standing Policy Committees**
  - Education
  - Economic Development and Transportation
  - Fiscal Affairs & Government Operations
  - Human Services and Public Safety
  - Energy and Environment
  - Agriculture and Rural Development
- **Member Services**
  - Policy Information Requests
  - Policy Publications
  - State Session Visits
  - Policy Masterclasses
  - Domestic & International Delegations

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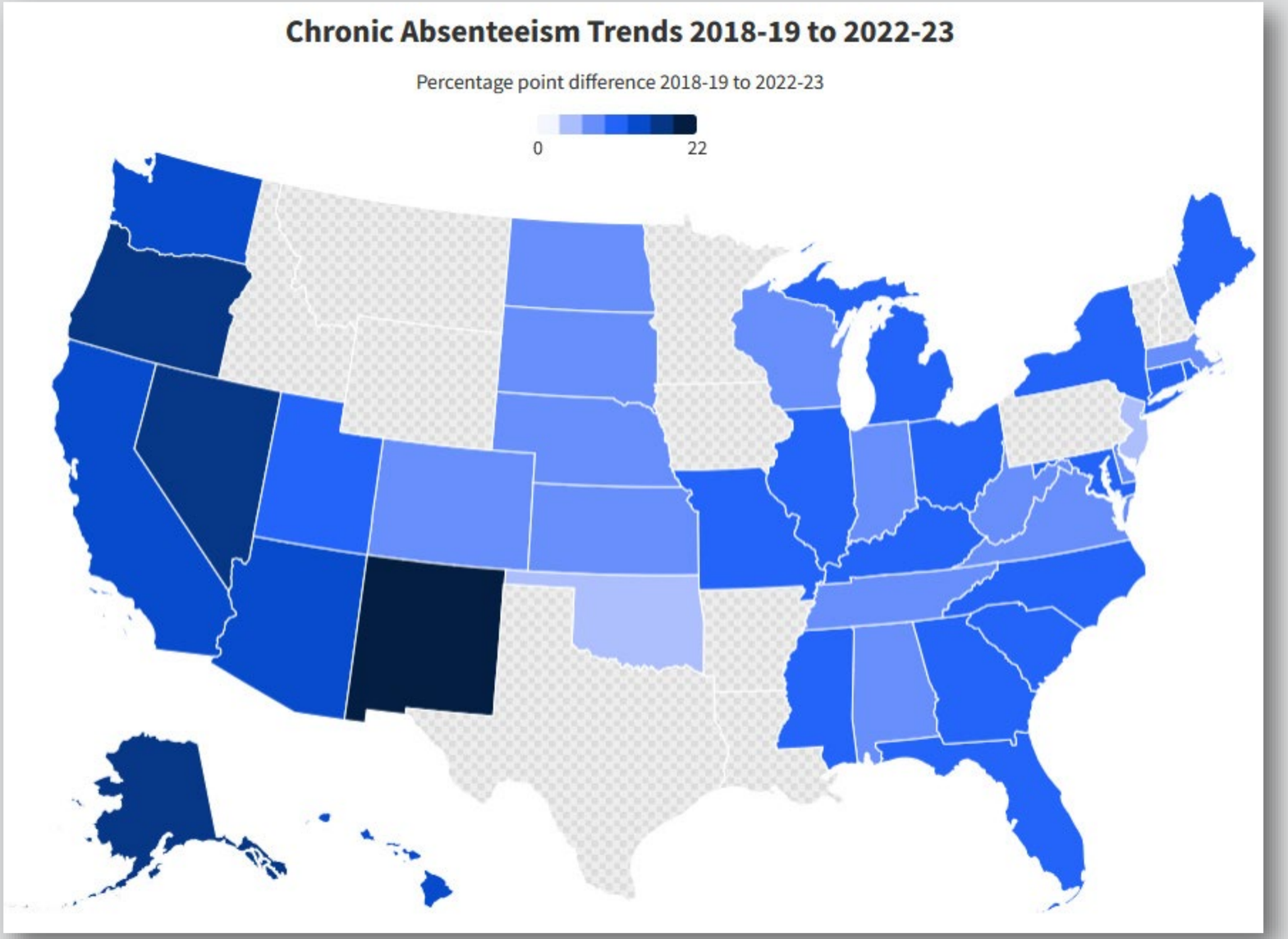
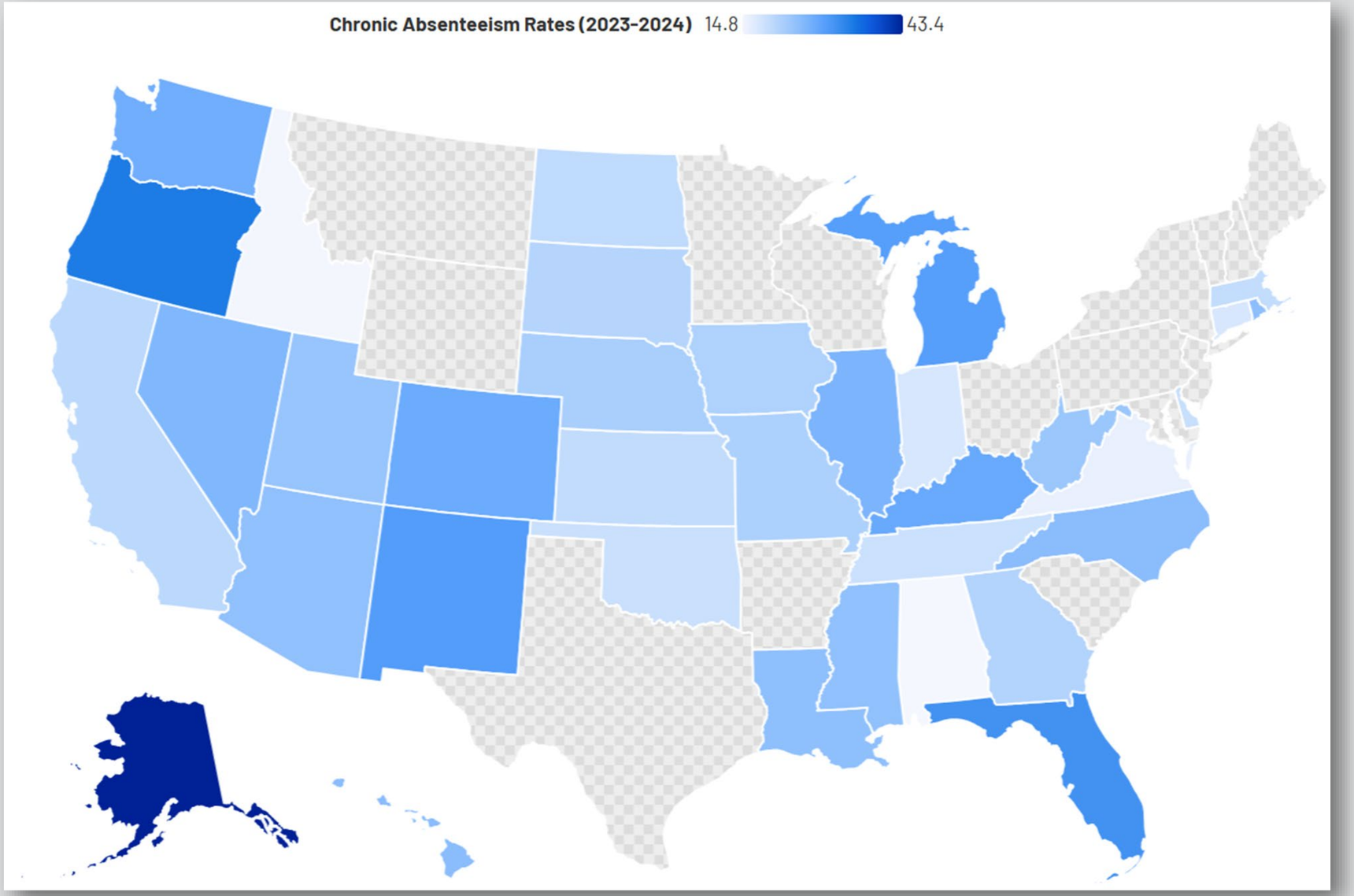
States Tackle Chronic Absenteeism



STATE	PRE- TO POST-PANDEMIC CHANGE (%)
Texas	+ 13.6
Kentucky	+ 12.0
South Carolina	+ 11.6
Florida	+ 10.9
Mississippi	+ 10.9
North Carolina	+ 10.8
Missouri	+ 10.7
Georgia	+ 9.9
Virginia	+ 8.7
Arkansas	+ 8.5
West Virginia	+ 7.6
Louisiana	+ 7.2
Tennessee	+ 7.1
Alabama	+ 6.7
Oklahoma	+ 6.0
CSG South Average	**+ 9.5 %**



CSG South States Above U.S. Average:

- ❑ *Florida* 31.4%
- ❑ *Kentucky* 28.0%
- ❑ *North Carolina* 25.0%
- ❑ *Louisiana* 24.6%
- ❑ *Mississippi* 24.4%
- ❑ *West Virginia* 23.5%

5 Key Focus Areas in State Efforts to Combat Absenteeism

01 Post-pandemic absenteeism surge

02 Understanding truancy v. chronic absence

03 Policy shifts from punishment to support

04 Team-based and community responses

05 Real-time data for decision-making

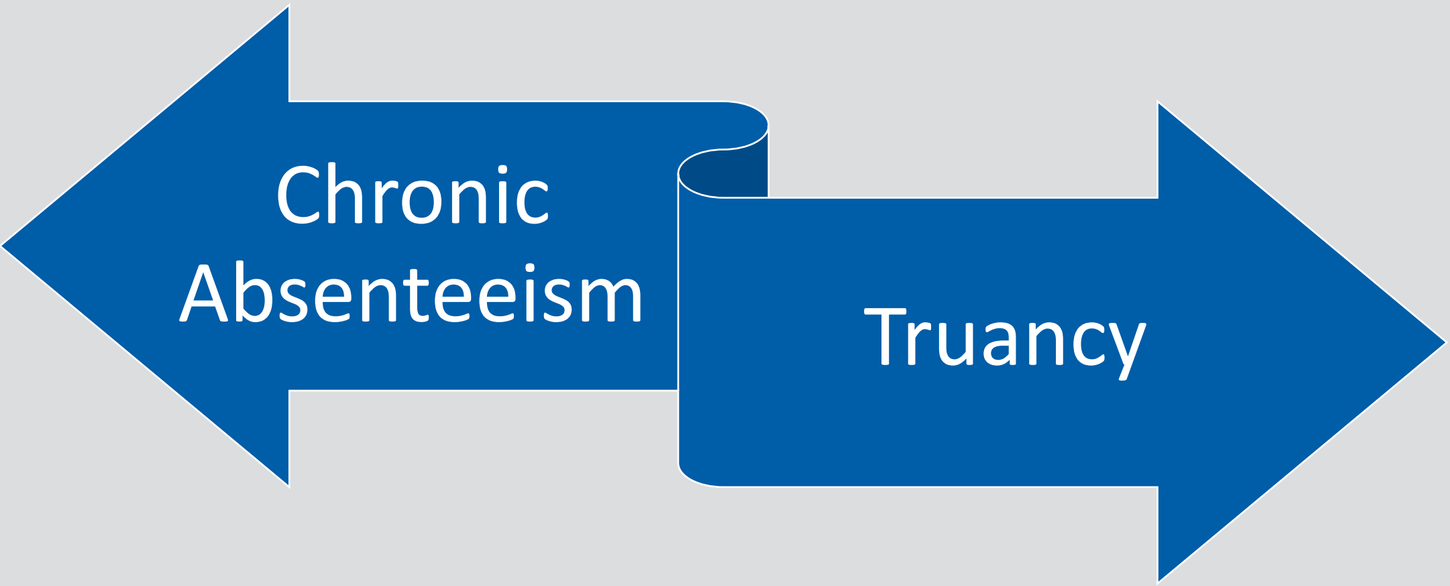
The Growing Crisis

Sharp Increases Since 2018
Chronic absenteeism rates nearly doubled nationwide between 2018 and 2023, climbing *from 14 % to 26 % overall*. Southern states saw a similar or even steeper rise.

Pandemic Amplified the Problem
While absenteeism existed pre-COVID, the pandemic accelerated disengagement, disrupted routines, and increased challenges in tracking attendance reliably.

Limited and Delayed Data
By late 2023, *only 12 states had published full absenteeism data for the previous academic year*, complicating timely interventions.

Understanding the Distinction



Chronic absenteeism *includes all absences—excused, unexcused, and suspensions—that exceed 10 % of the school year.*

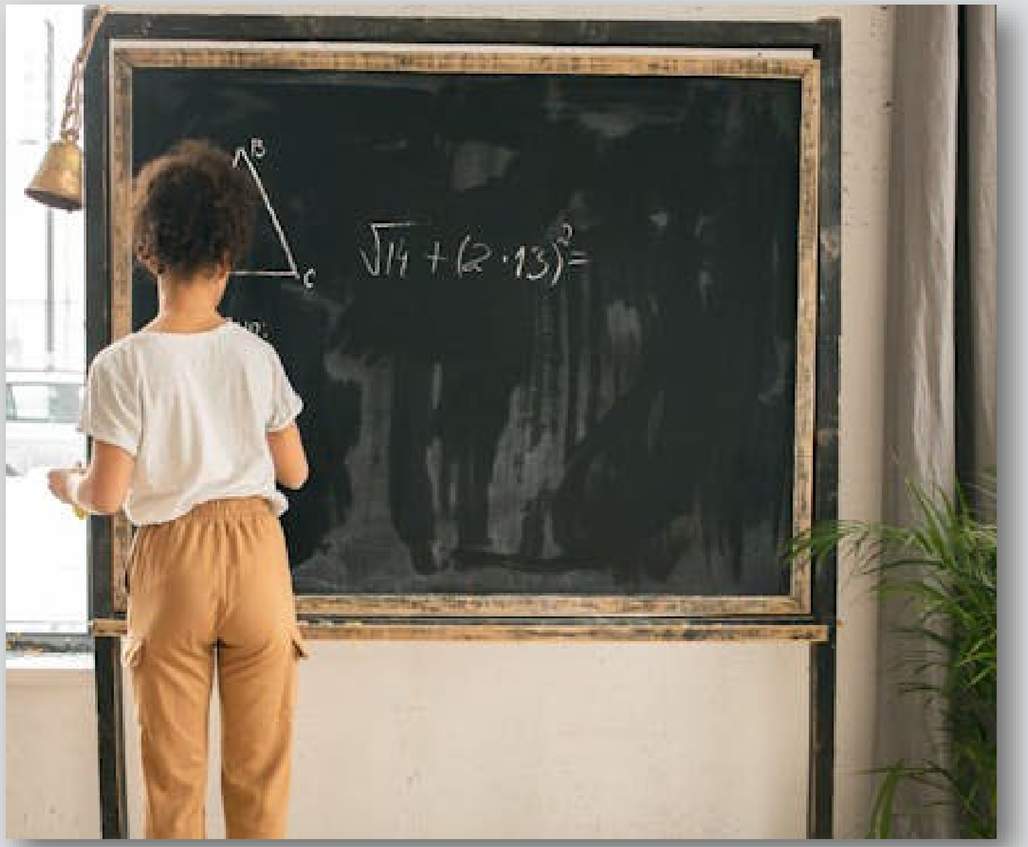
Truancy *refers strictly to unexcused absences and often triggers legal or disciplinary action. Policy responses must distinguish between the two to be effective.*

Policy Shift: From Punishment to Support

Suspension Restrictions
States like Arkansas, Florida, and Tennessee have passed laws to prohibit suspensions solely due to absenteeism, focusing on keeping students in school.

Intervention Before Punishment
Tennessee law mandates schools to assess and intervene before punitive actions—offering counseling and community services to at-risk students.

Supporting Learning During Suspension
Arkansas requires schools provide alternative learning option even when students face suspension for non-attendance-related violations.



Team-Based & Community Interventions

State-Defined Attendance Teams
States like Connecticut and Maine require school attendance review teams, including educators, counselors, and community representatives, to identify causes and solutions.

Case Reviews and Action Plans
Attendance teams meet regularly to analyze chronic absentee cases and recommend both in-school and external supports tailored to each student.

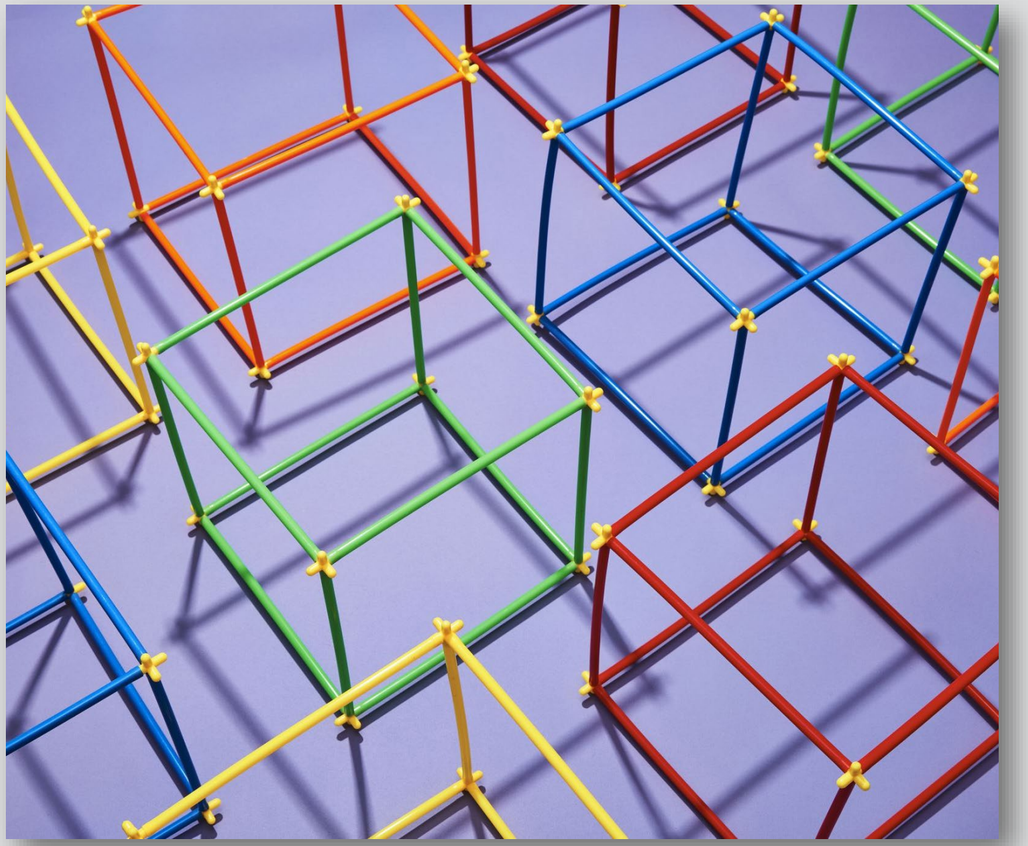
Collaboration Emphasized
Mandated consistency in the involvement of families and mental/behavioral health professionals to develop effective and compassionate strategies.

Real-Time Data Dashboards

The Ocean State Way
Rhode Island pioneered a daily real-time dashboard offering transparent and actionable insights into chronic absentees by district and individual schools.

Tracking Risk to Target Interventions
Connecticut and Indiana also use dashboards to identify at-risk students to better direct timely supported interventions and improve outcomes.

Building a Data-Driven Culture
Tools are only as useful as the data they are based on. They require consistently accurate and updated data to empower policymakers, educators, and families to collaborate and adjust interventionary policies on the fly.



Combatting Chronic Absenteeism: Closing Thoughts

- ❑ "Garbage in, Garbage Out" = Policymakers need timely and accurate data to act
- ❑ Collaboration between different state entities, schools and parents, and community support is needed to address the root causes
- ❑ Consider building on the model set by SB123 (2025) to require interagency tracking for stronger, more personalized interventions

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