

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

George Moura
Communications Coordinator
412-467-6482
gmoura@cispac.org



**The Richard King Mellon Foundation Supports New Attendance Initiative
in Westmoreland County**

PITTSBURGH (October 13, 2022) –

Thanks to the generous support of The Richard King Mellon Foundation, Communities in Schools of Pittsburgh-Allegheny County (CISPAC) is proud to announce a new initiative to fight chronic absenteeism in Westmoreland County. Thanks to this investment of \$775,000, CISPAC will be able to provide full-time attendance support specialists to support three school districts in Westmoreland County (Burrell, Greensburg-Salem, and New Kensington-Arnold) and the Northern Westmoreland Career and Technology Center.

Chronic absenteeism and truancy are big problem in many of our local districts – problems that only increased in the last few years due to complications from the pandemic and return to school. **Students who miss large amounts of school not only see their grades suffer but are also more likely to drop out or end up in the juvenile detention system.** But absenteeism is often a symptom of more complicated problems at home. Anything from mental health issues to poverty and food insecurity can lead to students abandoning school to meet their other needs.

The Richard King Mellon Foundation is committed to treating the deeper root of this chronic absenteeism with this investment. Foundation director, Sam Reiman says, “I think it’s one of those things where we have to reflect on what are those other issues and not make the assumption out of the gate that the school environment is perfect in every situation and the solution is just to get the kids back,” he said. “There could be other reasons why they’re opting out of that school environment.”

CISPAC’s program will employ attendance and family engagement specialists to work in school and out in the community to bring kids back to their classrooms. By going door-to-door and meeting families where they are, CISPAC can help families find the resources and tools they need to ensure their students stay in school and succeed in life.

###

About Communities In Schools of Pittsburgh – Allegheny County

CISPAC is part of the Communities In Schools® network that ensures all students have what they need to stay in school and on a path to a brighter future. Working directly inside more than 2,500 schools and community sites across the country, we connect 1.62 million students to caring adults and community resources designed to help them succeed in school and life. With a proven mix of evidence-based practice and human capital, we do whatever it takes to empower kids to realize their full potential. To learn more about CISPAC, visit cispac.org.