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Via Email Correspondence: Corleyccj@gmail.com; andrew.davidson@jonescork.com

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RE: *Follow-Up Letter on Open Records Act Complaint from Laura Corley regarding the Bibb County School District*

Dear Ms. Corley and Mr. Davidson:

The purpose of Georgia's Open Records Act ("Act") is to allow the public to evaluate the expenditure of public funds and to foster confidence in government through openness to the public. *City of Atlanta v. Corey Entm't, Inc.*, 278 Ga. 474, 476 (2004). Not only do these requirements permit people to know what actions their public servants are undertaking, but they also foster public confidence in officials and the decisions that they make. The failure to serve those underlying purposes can lead to mistrust and controversy. The Attorney General believes the Open Records Act is one of the public official's most valuable tools in communicating with and serving citizens across the state.

Over the past months, our office's Open Government Mediation Program has mediated a dispute involving an Open Records Act request made by Ms. Laura Corley to the Bibb County School District ("school district"). Our office's mediation program does not have the statutory authority under the Open Records Act to conduct an *in camera* inspection of the settlement agreement at issue to formally opine as to whether its non-release under the exemption at O.C.G.A. § 50-18-72(a)(37) is legally sound under the Act. However, after further review of the school district's

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response, it does not appear that *Mullins v. City of Griffin*, 886 F. Supp. 21 (N.D. Ga. 1995) supports the school district's position on the non-release of the settlement agreement, should a financial settlement have been reached.

Our mediation program has therefore reached an impasse with the parties and is unable to assist further. This requires us to conclude the mediation. Our office reminds the parties of the private enforcement provisions under the Open Records Act set forth at O.C.G.A. § 50-18-73(a). Should assistance be needed with an Open Government dispute again in the future, please feel welcome to contact our mediation program.

Sincerely,

/s/ Kristen Settlemire

KRISTEN SETTLEMIRE
Senior Assistant Attorney General