Reviewer Rejoinder
Part II

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I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the authors' rebuttal. I agree with the points Dan Losen made in his rejoinder and will not repeat his arguments. Instead, I will briefly address two remaining issues raised in the rebuttal.

First, the authors argue that we misrepresented their conclusions, highlighting one quotation from their paper that, we agree, offers an accurate interpretation of the results. As we noted in our review, there were points where the authors offered more reasonable and measured discussion. However, given the extremely small effects and the very large sample, the paper overstated the weight and implications of the findings, on balance. For example, throughout the rest of the paper, the effects of suspension on test scores were consistently described as "null to positive," and any significant negative effects of suspension on test scores were repeatedly minimized or dismissed (e.g., p. 21 and p. 26). More broadly, the substance and tone of the presentation of results and conclusions pointed to positive effects of suspension on achievement and skepticism about the value of discipline reform (e.g., pp. 21-22). Therefore, we feel our assessment of the paper's conclusions was fair.

Regarding our critique of the econometric methods used in the paper, I want to be clear that we agree, in principle, with the methodological justification provided for this analysis. The rich data on individual students combined with the fixed effects strategy used in the paper does have potential to reduce concerns about causal inference in this area of research. I have made this same argument and have used similar methods in my own work. However, these econometric tools only provide better estimates if used appropriately, and they have their own unique set of limitations, which were highlighted in our review. Therefore, our concern about issues like overfitting (e.g., associated with the inclusion of such detailed infraction measures) does not reflect a misunderstanding of the authors' strategy, but rather a consideration of the costs and benefits of different modeling decisions. The same argument applies to the decision to model only the lagged effects of suspension without controlling for current year suspension, despite the acknowledgement that current year effects probably reflect harm (see Losen's rejoinder). While this decision is technically defensible on methodological grounds, it makes little sense from a theoretical or substantive standpoint. Moreover, the discussion and implications offered by the authors do not reflect this nuance. While we might have overlooked any one decision of this nature, virtually every choice made by the analysts seemed to "stack the deck" in favor of finding no harmful impact of suspensions. This pattern, coupled with a lack of transparency about the data and results (e.g., failure to present basic descriptive statistics or effects of control variables, providing full results for only one set of robustness checks, first including and later omitting the model R^2 statistics), convinced me to undertake the review.

In sum, we concur that the methodological tools employed in the paper are powerful. However, relatively few researchers working in the area of discipline reform have the training to evaluate these methods, and policymakers and administrators are unlikely to understand them. Thus, with great power comes great responsibility. While the authors may have found our criticism "overly harsh," getting this wrong – either the estimates themselves or their interpretation and implications – could have very real and very dire consequences for children in public schools. Further, because excessive exclusionary discipline disproportionately affects children of color and children in poverty, misinformation in the wrong hands could lead to policies that further disadvantage these groups. That said, I was encouraged by the summative arguments offered in the rebuttal, and I feel optimistic that any revisions will move the paper in a positive and productive direction. I am grateful that the authors thoughtfully engaged with our criticisms, and I hope they will ultimately be useful.