



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
*Larry Hogan, Governor*

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
*Dr. Karen Salmon, Superintendent*

January 21, 2021

Cheryl Bost  
President  
Maryland State Education Association  
140 Main Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Ms. Bost:

President Biden has identified reopening schools as one of his top priorities for his first 100 days in office – recently stating, “it should be a national priority to get our kids back into school and keep them in school.” The President’s chief medical advisor, Dr. Anthony Fauci, has said that “[t]he default position we should have is to bring the children back to school or keep them in school.”

Leading experts, including former FDA Commissioner and Maryland Coronavirus Task Force member Dr. Scott Gottlieb and the American Academy of Pediatrics agree that in-person instruction is safe for educators, safe for communities, and by far the safest place for students. We strongly support the call from President Biden to return students back to school and echo his administration’s sentiments that the prompt return to in-person instruction is vital to our nation’s success.

The impacts from this prolonged period of disrupted instruction are taking their toll on our students, our families, and our educators. It is a moral imperative to provide all of our students with every opportunity to succeed in a safe learning environment. This past year, almost entirely consisting of distance learning, has strained our ability as a State to provide those opportunities in an effective and equitable way.

While the online setting for instruction has improved in many ways since March of 2020, far too many students remain unable to participate and thrive in such an environment. We have already seen this in a tangible way, as failing grades for students throughout Maryland were far higher in the first term of this school year than in the previous year. The clear social and emotional toll that online learning has taken on students, families, and educators is yet another unquantifiable impact of the prolonged school building closure. Therefore, immediate action must be taken by every school system in our State to provide opportunities for in-person instruction to all students.

At this critical time for Maryland's educational system, your advocacy for a safe but expeditious return to in-person instruction would be a critical stepping stone to mitigating further disrupted instruction. It is estimated that by the end of this upcoming school year, the cumulative learning loss for students could equate to five to nine months on average with the losses disproportionately impacting students of color and low-income students.

Studies have indicated that school reopenings do not significantly increase community spread or contribute to rising hospitalization rates. Public health research reflects that absolute closure of school buildings is not necessary, and hybrid schedules returning students to in-person instruction have been successfully demonstrated in Maryland and other states.

The roadblocks to resuming in-person instruction must cease. We need to follow the science, and we must use the case studies from around the globe as a testament to the successful and safe return of students to their schools. The demonstrated mitigation efforts to protect all students and staff shall continue to be utilized in the school environment, and we will continue to assist local school systems as they seek to vaccinate all school staff in an efficient and appropriate manner.

As leaders of this great State, we are all called upon in this ongoing crisis to advocate on behalf of all of the children of Maryland.

Sincerely,



Larry Hogan  
Governor



Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.  
State Superintendent of Schools

CC: Diamonté Brown, President of the Baltimore Teachers Union