

From: [Michael Martirano](#)
To: [Danielle Lueking](#)
Cc: [Mark Blom](#)
Subject: Fw: Request for Closed Meeting at start of work session
Date: Monday, March 8, 2021 12:36:44 PM

I sent the email below to Dr. Wu and Ms. Mallo on 1/24/21 and copied the entire Board.

Dr. M.

Dr. Michael J. Martirano
Superintendent
Howard County Public School System
10910 Clarksville Pike
Ellicott City, Maryland 21042

“The time is always right to do what is right.”
Martin Luther King, Jr.

From: Michael Martirano <Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org>
Sent: Sunday, January 24, 2021 9:55 AM
To: Chao Wu <Chao_Wu@hcpss.org>; Jennifer Mallo <Jennifer_Mallo@hcpss.org>; Karalee Turner-Little <Karalee_TurnerLittle@hcpss.org>; Mark Blom <Mark_Blom@hcpss.org>; BoE Email <boe@hcpss.org>; Kathleen V. Hanks <Kathleen_Hanks@hcpss.org>
Cc: Cabinet <Cabinet@hcpss.org>; Michael Martirano <Michael_Martirano@hcpss.org>
Subject: Re: Request for Closed Meeting at start of work session

Dr. Wu and Ms. Mallo,

As I stated on Thursday night, I would be seeking more guidance from the State Superintendent regarding the Governor's latest press conference. In that press conference, the State Superintendent stated:

"In conjunction with the announcements from the Governor and Dr. Chan today, local school systems SHALL plan immediately for the return of students for in-person instruction by no later than March 1st." (the entire statement is listed below).

In this statement, the word SHALL is used which is defined as a mandated directive. In consultation with legal, the Maryland Educational Code provides broad authority to the State Superintendent, and in reading the code, it is believed to support this action by the State Superintendent.

To that end, it is my plan to begin my presentation tomorrow night with an enhanced overview of this question in addition to other information that I have gathered since the press conference. Another piece of important information that was shared by Dr. Chan from MDH is about vaccines. I was informed that vaccines should not be used as reason to open or not to open school and if you watch the press conference this was stated there as well. It is my plan to address this with in our presentation with Dr. Rossman and Ms. Wageman.

Summarily, I suggest that we do not have a closed session because I believe it will be redundant as I will be having the same discussion in public at our work session. We will be prepared to answer and all legal

questions in public. Thank you.

Updates from the State Superintendent

**Remarks by
State Superintendent Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
January 21, 2021**

Thank you Governor for your continued support and leadership on behalf of Maryland's 900,000 students.

In conjunction with the announcements from the Governor and Dr. Chan today, local school systems shall plan immediately for the return of students for in-person instruction by no later than March 1st.

The recovery plans that were developed by local school systems for hybrid and full in-person instruction that were approved by the State Department of Education in August of 2020 should be implemented to meet this timeline. Parents and families who wish to remain in a virtual learning environment should be afforded the opportunity to do so.

The impacts of closed schools on our students have been severe and we must make every effort to mitigate any further learning loss from this period of disrupted instruction. Research on disrupted instruction shows that the cumulative learning loss for students by the end of the 2020-2021 school year could equate to five to nine months on average, with the losses significantly greater for students of color and low-income students.

In-person learning provides significant benefits for our children. In addition to educational instruction, schools support the development of social and emotional skills through interactions with teachers and peers; they establish a safe environment for learning and often address nutritional, behavioral health and other special needs; as well as facilitate physical activity.

The absence of in-person learning may be particularly harmful for children living in poverty, children of color, English language learners, children with diagnosed disabilities, and young children, and likely have already contributed to widening inequities in our society. It is our obligation as State leaders to intervene on behalf of these students to ensure they are afforded the opportunities to succeed and grow. This morning, the Governor and I shared a letter with the Maryland State Education Association, imploring the leadership of the union to work alongside us to safely return students and staff to school buildings.

After reviewing all of the research available regarding the impact of the pandemic on the operating status of school buildings, there is not a demonstrated public health reason to keep schools closed. We know from contact tracing that the majority of cases affecting staff or students when schools were open for hybrid instruction originated outside of school facilities. Additionally, we have seen child care facilities and the school systems that have chosen to reopen do so safely and without significant impact on community spread.

All schools that reopen shall continue to utilize the appropriate health and safety measures to mitigate the transmission of the virus, such as: consistent and correct use of masks, social distancing to the largest extent possible, hand hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and contact

tracing in collaboration with local health departments.

In an effort to bolster a safe learning environment for all educators, school staff, and students, all local school systems are coordinating with local health departments and local hospitals to identify available vaccines for administration to their staff. Several systems have already begun vaccinating school staff at this time, and more will commence vaccinations in the coming days.

While receiving vaccinations are not a requisite precursor restricting a return to in-person instruction, they can further ensure a safe and comfortable learning environment for those that are wary of the prospect of returning to school buildings. I will continue to work with the team at MDH and with local school systems to make certain that this process continues with haste and efficiency.

There are more than \$780 million in additional funds allocated from the second iteration of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) to assist local school systems for a wide range of allowable uses, including remediation of learning loss, implementation of summer learning programs, and purchasing educational technology.

Additional funding for evidence-based strategies such as extending and implementing high-intensity tutoring services to more students, establishing additional and extended summer learning programs, addressing social-emotional learning, and providing targeted academic acceleration to further mitigate the impacts from this disruption of instruction are vital strategies in our efforts to combat the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on our students.

I strongly encourage local school systems to consider many of these as they develop plans for the utilization of funds, particularly targeted tutoring and extending the length of the school year for summer learning.

We will continue to offer assistance and guidance to school systems as they bring students back in various learning formats in an expeditious manner in the coming days and weeks, and look forward to having our children afforded the opportunity to learn in-person in a safe and conducive environment once again.

To the parents and families that have written countless letters to me in recent months, I want you to know that I have read each and every one and the difficulty and stress that so many of you have faced since the start of this pandemic has been heard loud and clear. It's these experiences that shape so much of how I have thought about our mission in schools, and I have a deep sense of gratitude for our parents as they've stood beside their children and teachers as all parties have weathered the difficulties of virtual learning.

I want to take a moment before I conclude my remarks today to thank all of our State workers, educators, and school staff who have continued to fulfill the critical responsibilities of their job despite the challenges of the pandemic. And I also want to thank our child care providers for their steadfast support for the children of Maryland, as they have been providing safe refuge for our youngest children since the earliest days of the pandemic.

Thank you.

Dr. M.

Dr. Michael J. Martirano
Superintendent

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