



August 28, 2020

We are pleased that the State finally heeded our call for statewide guidance on reopening metrics that are informed by medical facts and public health science. However, the remarks at the Governor's press conference yesterday were very surprising and implied that superintendents and local school boards have been unable and unwilling to return our students to school. That is an inaccurate characterization, and certainly not in the spirit of partnership we have extended to both departments.

We have been asking for State guidance with health metrics for bringing students back to school, as well as consistent guidance across the state since June and PSSAM's formal request may be found here [Link](#). As the letter makes clear, we agree that we need more specific guidance on (1) the appropriate usage of *PPEs*, (2) clarifications on the role of school systems and local health departments in *contact tracing*, and statewide protocols (3) clear *metrics* based on medical research for re-opening, transitioning to new hybrid models, or future closures of schools.

Several other states had developed such guidance, and we knew it could provide a foundation for decision-making in Maryland. Unfortunately, without this guidance, each system has been working on local plans with their health departments. In this light, to state that the local recovery plans are insufficient without having these metrics from the beginning stages of planning, and without a rubric of assessment before submitting the plans is confounding. Our plans were developed by an inclusive group of all stakeholders and this planning started in May.

Local superintendents and members of local boards of education created plans that would provide a strong education foundation in a world of unknowns, but also assuring stakeholders and their families of our concerns for their safety. We agree that teachers are essential employees and vital to the success of our students and their future. As we have opened our school doors to staff this month and as many of us are preparing to welcome students in the coming month, it is imperative to have the support of all constituencies. This transition must take place slowly, steadily, and safely while based on health metrics.

Again, while we are pleased to finally have guidance from the State, we are deeply concerned about the timing of this guidance being provided so late in the planning stages.

On behalf of all 24 local school systems, we will now forge ahead with our local health departments on implementing these guidelines and metrics and providing our students with the highest level of public education in this unprecedented worldwide crisis.

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