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Date: 6/6/2020 12:26:13 PM
Subject: Education Concerns

Good Morning,

I hope you are well and enjoying the beautiful weather today! I am writing to ask for your help in whatever you can do to put some pressure on the release of guidance relative to school districts. As you may be aware, school districts are required to operate an extended school year program. This is a six week period of time during which any student classified under special education whom the IEP team determines would regress over the summer and not recoup the skills in a reasonable amount of time in the fall receive instruction. School districts have not received any guidance relative to the operation of the extended school year program. Extended school year begins in most districts on July 6, and Monmouth County school districts were forced to make our own decision to keep this program virtual based on the absence of any guidance from the Governor or NJDOE. The thought that guidance could be released that dictates the program be delivered in any manner other than virtual is frightening, and districts would not be prepared to do so.

I remain highly concerned that there has been no guidance relative to reopening schools in the fall. I know I share the opinions of several of my colleagues that this should have been considered months ago, and we are already behind in planning and preparing for the 2020-2021 school year. There will likely be an impact on the budget, whether we are virtual or in person. If we are in person, there are several unknows such as class size limitations, PPE, rules for sanitizing, staff training, etc. We may need additional equipment to sanitize if we are alternating days for students to attend school. We may need additional custodial staff to accomplish cleaning tasks. If there are restrictions on bussing, we may need additional drivers, busses or modify school times to run multiple routes with less kids on a bus. These are just a few issues that are of concern to me without the guidance to plan for the fall.

I am sure you saw the questions that Dr. Aderhold, Superintendent of West Windsor Plainsboro School District and President of the Garden State Coalition of Schools, published. That list contains over 200 questions that continue to go unanswered. Please help me advocate for the students of Freehold Township in ensuring that guidance is issued soon. Our students need us to prepare an environment that is safe and conducive to learning. Their parents deserve to know the manner in which their children will be educated, especially if they must alter their work schedules to accommodate an alternate school day. Thank you for your time and your support.

Neal Dickstein

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