



MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

850 Hungerford Drive ♦ Room 123 ♦ Rockville, Maryland 20850

January 5, 2021

The Honorable Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.
Governor, The State of Maryland
The State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

As president of the Montgomery County Board of Education and superintendent of schools, Montgomery County Public Schools—Maryland’s largest public school system representing more than 160,000 students—we write to advocate that all Maryland prekindergarten–Grade 12 educators be considered essential for the purpose of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine in Phase 1B. Providing the early vaccination of those entrusted with educating and caring for Maryland’s students will ensure a safe and speedy return to in-person instruction for students in Montgomery County and throughout the state.

The consideration of educators as essential workers for Phase 1B COVID-19 vaccination is aligned with the definition of essential workers provided by the Department of Homeland Security and the recommendation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prioritizing educators also has been a strategy adopted by several states across the nation.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely has impacted the ability of schools to serve students the way we best know how—through in-person instruction. Though some students are thriving in virtual learning, many students need the in-person experience with educators to ensure they meet their full potential as learners and community members.

COVID-19 new case and test positivity rates in Montgomery County and across Maryland place school systems significantly beyond the guidelines for a safe reopening provided by the state on August 27, 2020. While studies suggest that children have lower risk of serious illnesses stemming from COVID-19, our educators and staff serving them remain vulnerable when community spread is high, even with a strong risk mitigation plan for our return that includes face coverings for students and staff; physical distancing; frequent hand cleaning; and enhancements to Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning systems.

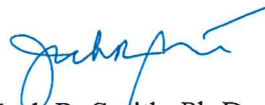
We know that limited doses of the COVID-19 vaccine require your administration to make difficult decisions regarding which community members will have access to the vaccine first. We ask that strong consideration be given to including the prekindergarten–Grade 12 educators of our state in Phase 1B of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

Thank you for your support for all of the students, families, and educators in Maryland.

Sincerely,



Brenda Wolff
President
Montgomery County Board of Education



Jack R. Smith, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Montgomery County Public Schools

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Members of the Board of Education
Executive Staff
Ms. Webb