



For Immediate Release
February 5, 2021

Virginia School Re-Opening Coalitions Respond to Governor Northam's Announcement Regarding Schools

On behalf of tens of thousands of parents in Virginia we want to acknowledge and thank Governor Ralph Northam for today calling on the remaining school districts in the Commonwealth to provide access to some form of in-person education by March 15 at the latest. Though it comes almost one year after the shuttering of in-person education in Virginia, it is a welcome and necessary step to addressing the needs of children in the Commonwealth.

The action today by the Governor is an important addition to the landslide of evidence -- from studies showing the safety of schools to data demonstrating the mental health harms and learning losses accumulating daily in our kids -- that for months has proven that in-person education is best for most of our students.

The Governor's statement acknowledges that the associated harms of not attending school in person are far greater than the impacts of COVID-19 on children, and it comes as a welcome ray of hope to parents and children as we approach nearly a year of virtual learning in our area. We also want to especially acknowledge the efforts of Fairfax Senator Chap Petersen, who has worked tirelessly to arrive at this point to begin to get Virginia's students back in the classroom.

We are also encouraged by the Governor's support for providing school districts with resources to pursue immediate efforts to provide for catch-up educational opportunities throughout the summer of 2021. We look forward to seeing how our local school districts plan for implementation of such a concept -- and we urge that school districts provide these opportunities in person for students who want and need it.

As parents, we will continue to support our children and will continue to urge policymakers at every level to prioritize them so that all students, of all abilities, in all grades, have the opportunity to learn in the setting known to be most effective: in a classroom with a teacher, 5 days a week. A return to 5 days a week of in person education this school year is vitally important to helping to rectify the academic, mental, and emotional challenges brought on by the last 11 months.

As ad-hoc advocacy groups, we would like to thank the thousands of parents who have worked endlessly to hold our school districts accountable for following the science on reopening schools, and to push our decision-makers to consider the needs and interests of our children. Without the active involvement and engagement of parents, telling the story of this past year, we would not be at this pivotal point. Our bipartisan efforts are not done.

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OpenACPS (Alexandria City), Arlington Parents for Education (Arlington County), OpenFCPS (Fairfax County), Falls Church City Parents for Schools (Falls Church City), LCPS Can Do Better (Loudoun County), #TeachMEinPerson PWCS (Prince William County), VA Beach Back2School (Virginia Beach)

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