



March 18, 2020

The Honorable Jake Corman
Majority Leader
Senate of Pennsylvania
Room 350 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Bryan Cutler
Majority Leader
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Room 110 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Jay Costa
Minority Leader
Senate of Pennsylvania
Room 535 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Frank Dermody
Minority Leader
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Room 423 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Senator Corman, Senator Costa, Representative Cutler, and Representative Dermody:

As public school officials, educators, and school employees deal with the impact COVID-19 has had on their students and communities, we need state-level policy in order to properly plan for the next steps in what will likely be a long battle against coronavirus.

Clearly, this situation is unprecedented. And, as we all share the goal of providing for the health, safety, and well being of Pennsylvania’s students, we hope you will act immediately to pass legislation providing the consistent statewide policy our members need to do our jobs, protect our employees, and serve our students.

We commend you for your bi-partisan leadership on this issue and note that the recent and planned rule changes in the House and Senate allow for the kind of rapid, decisive action that our schools and students need. We urge you to use this authority to act on legislation this week.

The legislative language you have crafted will provide for the following essential clarifications and ensure a sense of continuity for the entire education community:

- Waive the 180-day school year requirement;
- Increase the number of flexible instructional days permissible during this pandemic closure to a number determined by the secretary;
- Require PDE to apply for a federal waiver from PSSA and Keystone Exam testing;
- Authorize the secretary to waive NOCTI and NIMS exams for Career and Technical Education students;
- Ensure all employees, particularly education support professionals, receive no more or no less compensation than they otherwise would have received;
- Ensure no employee receives more or less credit or contributes more or less than they otherwise would have pursuant to the Public-School Employees' Retirement System under 24 Pa.C.S. Pt. IV;
- Ensure that school entities provide proper protective gear for custodians who provide deep cleaning of potentially infected school buildings; and
- Waive the twelve-week student teacher requirement.

These legislative changes will provide much needed guidance and continuity to Pennsylvania students, their families, educators, and the entire education community during this crisis. The unprecedented situation presented by COVID-19 has highlighted how critical our schools are in supporting students and entire communities, especially during this period of statewide closures.

These changes are urgent, because they will help to ensure that Pennsylvania's public education system will continue to function. We encourage you to act on them this week in order to provide the consistent and statewide policy for crisis management that our public schools urgently need.

Sincerely,

Pennsylvania School Boards Association

Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators

Pennsylvania Principals Association

Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials

Pennsylvania State Education Association

AFT – Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Association of Intermediate Units

Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools

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