

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Maria Collett
Pennsylvania Senate
183 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Senator Collett:

As the Executive Director of the Bucks County Intermediate Unit (Bucks IU), and the Superintendents of the thirteen public school districts in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, we are jointly writing to you to urgently and respectfully request your immediate support and championship of legislation to enact emergency legislation in an effort to help our schools deal with the effect of the coronavirus.

As we work through the impact that COVID-19 has had on our students and communities, we urgently need state-level policy in order to properly plan for our next steps, in what will likely be a long battle against the virus. Clearly, this situation is unprecedented and, as we all share the goal of providing for the health, safety, and well-being of Bucks County school students, we hope you will act immediately to pass legislation providing the consistent statewide policy we need in order to continue to do our jobs, protect our employees, and serve our students.

These changes include:

- **Eliminate the 180-day requirement for all public and nonpublic schools and home education programs.**
- **Allow the Secretary of Education to accept applications for Flexible Instructional Days (FIDs) from school entities that may not have previously applied for such days and also increase the number of allowable FIDS in order to permit additional educational opportunities for our students while they are confined at home.**
- **Ensure that all state funding, including school subsidies and reimbursements that otherwise were expected to be received by intermediate units and school districts for the 2019-2020 school year, are still received, without penalty.**

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- **Ensure employees receive no more or no less compensation than they otherwise would have anticipated receiving for the 2019-2020 school year.**
- **Ensure no employee receives more or less credit or contributes more or less than they otherwise would have during the 2019-2020 school year pursuant to the Public-School Employees' Retirement System under 24 Pa.C.S. Pt. IV.**
- **Allow the Secretary of Education to also waive:**
 - Career and technical education program hours
 - Using performance data in the teacher evaluation system
 - Pre-K Counts required hours of instruction
 - NIMS assessments/NOCTI exams
 - Twelve-week student teacher requirement
- ***Special Education and Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):* Require the Secretary of Education to request that the US Department of Education provide guidance to school entities on special education services to students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and accommodations for FAPE if instruction is temporarily provided by school entities in an alternate format, such as through virtual or online learning platforms.**
- ***Financial Reimbursements for Online/Virtual Learning:* Reimburse school districts for the costs incurred for temporarily providing alternate formats of educational activities or instruction including platforms for virtual or online learning, the costs of technology and other equipment for staff and students that are necessary for virtual or online learning, and the reimbursements of costs of professional development for staff to learn how to appropriately utilize such platforms**
- ***Assessments:* Require the Secretary of Education to apply to the US Department of Education for testing waivers to permit cancellation of assessments for the 2019-20 school year.**

These legislative changes will provide much needed guidance and continuity to Pennsylvania students, families, educators, and the entire education community during this crisis. The unprecedented situation that COVID-19 has presented highlights just how critical our schools are in supporting students and entire communities, especially during this period of statewide closures. These changes are urgent as they will help to ensure that Pennsylvania's public education system will continue to function efficiently and effectively. We strongly encourage you to act on these changes as quickly as possible so that we can continue to provide the

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consistent and uniform statewide policy for crisis management that our public schools so urgently need.


Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Hoffman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Hoffman, Ed.D.

Executive Director, Bucks County Intermediate Unit


Bucks County Intermediate Unit


Dr. Samuel Lee,
Superintendent
Bensalem School District


Dr. Rose Minniti, Superintendent
Bristol Borough School District


Dr. Melanie Gehrens,
Superintendent
Bristol Township School District


Dr. David E. Baugh, Superintendent
Centennial School District


Dr. John Kopicki, Superintendent
Central Bucks School District



Dr. Robert Fraser, Superintendent
Council Rock School District



Mr. Jason Harris, Superintendent
School District of Borough of Morrisville


Mr. Joseph Jones,
Superintendent
Neshaminy School District


Dr. Charles Lentz,
Superintendent
New Hope-Solebury School District


Dr. Bridget O'Connell,
Superintendent
Palisades School District


Dr. David Bolton, Superintendent
Pennridge School District


Dr. William Gretzula, Superintendent
Pennsbury School District


Dr. William E. Harner, Superintendent
Quakertown Community School District

Bucks County School District Superintendents

