

Thank you for providing a virtual opportunity to testify today, we are knee deep in planning and trying to make sure that we have an opening plan for this fall that addresses all stakeholder concerns, and today alone, we have two committee meetings that include 40 plus educators that are coming in virtually, on their time to help navigate elementary instruction plans for fall as well as safety plans for this fall. We have several committees that are meeting throughout June and July to put together an array of options for how we open up in fall given the state of the pandemic at that time. This truly is a herculean task, but it is a task that we will prevail in.

On March 12th I was a part of a meeting gauntlet that was completely unprecedented. The result of those meetings was completely rethinking the daily routines and experiences of ALL South Milwaukee stakeholders. It was an experience that I don't wish on anybody; and the desire to return to normal is shared by all. However, as normal is something that we will strive for; we must be cognizant of the risks involved to all South Milwaukee stakeholders. The job of South Milwaukee leadership is to be as cost effective as possible while safely reaching the educational goals of our students while amidst a pandemic that is demanding unprecedented modifications in how we operate.

There are two items that we need to be able to move forward with the confidence to handle the continuing pandemic going into the fall. The first is we need consistent guidance that will include some sort of immunity toward making progress to getting back to normal during the COVID-19 pandemic. I understand that there is a need for schools to open in the fall in order to fully restart the economy. I also understand that there is no completely safe way to reopen schools so long as there is no vaccine or treatment for the virus. All scenarios that put groups of students together create risks for transmitting the disease. We will do all that is feasible in order keep our students and staff as safe as possible, but there is a very real possibility that people will get sick. Since schools are being asked to assume this risk to reopen the economy, our ask is that schools are not held liable for the transmission of COVID-19.

The second item is assurance that the funding included in the 2019-21 biennial budget is realized. It is obvious that there will be additional costs to modify operations to deal with the pandemic. Locally each district will need to figure out how to fund the costs associated with this pandemic. What will not help us manage this pandemic is the uncertainty about funding in the second year of the current biennium. A budget repair bill during 2020-21 that cuts school funding will cause schools to reduce services and make a tough situation significantly worse. This fall, we will most likely be running two separate instructional models: virtual and physically distanced models. This will require additional planning by our teachers, more outreach by our pupil services staff, and a greater need for cleaning by our operations staff.

We understand that you as state legislators are going to be faced with a challenge to pass a balanced budget next year, for the 2021-23 Biennium. We as school district leaders will be faced with the same challenge. In this unprecedented time it is more important than ever to have local, state and federal officials working together, to ensure that our students and communities are supported, and learning opportunities and supports remain equitable for all. With that said, South Milwaukee highly recommends that our State Legislators join all local municipalities and governments in requesting a Federal COVID-19 allocation that provides state stabilization funds to

make up the revenue loss associated with COVID-19. Such an allocation should help bridge the gap between the COVID-19 pandemic and the successful restart of our great economy.