

November 15, 2020

Dear Governor Northam, State Legislators, Secretary Qarni, and Superintendent Lane,

On November 11, Governor Northam spoke, asking us to not gather in groups, particularly as families, during the holidays. On November 13, he reinstated proven safety measures for businesses to protect all of the Commonwealth's people, but he specifically exempted schools from those new measures. As our Commonwealth unites to push back against the current rapid increase in COVID-19 infections, we need Governor Northam to provide leadership for our schools, in addition to the guidance he has provided for businesses and other public spaces.

Education Associations in the Northern Virginia Region, representing more than 12,000 school employees, are urging you to return the entire Commonwealth back to Phase II of the reopening strategy, including a recommendation that public schools return to virtual learning as the safest option until case rates return to a downward trend and remain below 5% PCR as indicated by the CDC.

It continues to be clear that Northern Virginia is past the point of safe metrics for in-person learning in our school buildings. It is also clear that many of the districts surrounding us, and across the state, are grappling with similar unsafe numbers as community spread increases and use of hospital facilities continue to rise. In district after district there are plans to send our youngest and most vulnerable students into classrooms and buildings in spite of international evidence that it has the propensity to cause a surge in the pandemic. It is unacceptable for our districts and the Commonwealth to disregard the advice of scientists and medical professionals during a global pandemic, thereby placing our students, staff, and entire communities at risk. Everyone, including educators, wants our schools to be back to normal, but by opening when it's not safe to do so, we increase the likelihood that normal will never come, and we risk our communities' lives in the bargain. Our local leaders are under attack from those who are focused on short term solutions with long term repercussions, and they need your leadership and support.

As COVID-19 cases continue to rise across the country, Northern Virginia and the rest of the Commonwealth are equally at risk at this time.

As of 11/15/2020 the data according to the [CDC School Metrics](#) last 14 days show:

Alexandria	RT-PCR tests 5.0% positivity with 178.2 new cases per 100,000
Arlington	RT-PCR tests 6.0% positivity with 224.8 new cases per 100,000
Fairfax	RT-PCR tests 7.1% positivity with 191.1 new cases per 100,000
Falls Church City	RT-PCR tests 7.0% positivity with 27.08 new cases per 100,000
Loudoun	RT-PCR tests 7.9% positivity with 187.3 new cases per 100,000
Manassas City	RT-PCR tests 9.5% positivity with 196.9 new cases per 100,000
Manassas Park	RT-PCR tests 9.5% positivity with 115.6 new cases per 100,000
Prince William	RT-PCR tests 9.1% positivity with 261.3 new cases per 100,000

Statewide, our current 7-Day Positivity Rate PCR is **8.2% with an upward trend**. Original CDC and WHO advice recommended schools not open if positivity rates were over 5%.

COVID-19 knows no city or county lines. We need a policy that covers our Commonwealth. We expect that once again you will help Virginia lead the nation by protecting our communities and especially our children.

Sincerely,

Fairfax Education Association
Arlington Education Association
Loudoun Education Association
Manassas Park Education Association
Prince William Education Association