



SOUTH DAKOTA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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**For Immediate Release
July 9, 2020**

Schools Must Be Safe

The following statement is attributed to the South Dakota Education Association President Mary McCorkle in response to the Trump Administration's threat to cut funding for schools that fail to fully open in the fall.

"South Dakota educators want nothing more than for students to return to school in the fall. We all want schools to open, but they must open safely. The health and safety of students, educators and staff must be the number one priority."

"School cannot start like 'normal' and those who advocate such a message put the health and safety of students, educators and their loved ones at risk. We must acknowledge that there is a new normal and schools must be able to have flexible plans that are based on the facts, science and data, not politics and rhetoric."

"Many districts have been working throughout the summer to develop multiple plans to start school, but there are many unknowns. What will social distancing look like? Will we require masks for all staff and students? Will there be better access to testing? How can schools obtain Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that they need to ensure the health and safety of all? What do we do if there is an outbreak? What if parents don't feel comfortable sending their children to school? We must have answers to these questions as part of any back to school plan. Rhetoric and 'just do it' messages are unhelpful and place no value on the health and safety of the school and community."

"What do educators need? They need to know they and their families will be safe. Our students and their families need the same assurance as does the community at large. Plans that are developed must have the voice of educators and staff included from the very beginning. We need the state to work with districts to help them have access to testing and obtaining PPE and cleaning supplies. We need the voice of all our leaders raised to support health and safety, not to sacrifice it."

"The U.S. Senate is sitting on the HEROES Act, which will provide local schools with the resources necessary to put the safety protocols in place as well as provide additional revenue for technology and training. The South Dakota Education Association urges Senator Thune and Senator Rounds to push for a vote in the Senate. The students and educators of South Dakota need and deserve a safe and healthy back to school. Congress was willing to step up to help businesses keep employees on the payrolls during shutdowns. Now we need them to step up to help schools have the personnel and resources to open schools safely for our students. There is nothing else more important"

"The educators of South Dakota miss their students. We want to be in our classrooms doing what we love, but we also deeply care about our colleagues, students, their families and our communities. Schools must open with health and safety foremost. It is time for our state and national leaders to get serious about back to school. Schools opening without real plans to ensure the health and safety of students and educators are simply unacceptable."

SDEA is South Dakota's largest education professionals' organization, representing more than 5,000 elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, retired educators and students preparing to become teachers.

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