

MITCH CARMICHAEL
SENATE PRESIDENT-LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



304-357-7801
MITCH.CARMICHAEL@WVSENATE.GOV

STATE CAPITOL, ROOM M-227
1900 KANAWHA BOULEVARD, EAST
CHARLESTON, WV 25305-0800

April 2, 2020

Governor Jim Justice
State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305

Dear Governor Justice,

We write to respectfully and formally request that you initiate the necessary actions to immediately cancel the remaining school year in West Virginia.

Current public health modeling projections suggest the COVID-19 virus will peak during the first week of May in West Virginia. Based upon these projections, we believe it would be wise to fall on the side of caution and keep students at home for the remainder of the 2020 school year rather than risk sending our children into potentially hazardous and untenable learning environments.

This move is necessary and makes good sense. Parents, rightfully, will be apprehensive about sending their children back into schools. Teachers and school service personnel, while no doubt brave and willing, could face higher risks of infection that can then be spread throughout the state. Students will face the same risks as well as a difficult and stressful learning environment upon return.

With proper guidance from public health officials, you rescheduled the May 12 primary election to prevent unnecessary health risks. The gathering of numerous children and adults in close proximity in a school setting for extended time periods is equally risky, if not more so.

We believe parents, students, teachers, service personnel, and the public at large will be best served by providing them with certainty relating to the state's plan for our schools for the remainder of this academic year. It is far better for us as a state to gather our strength, commitment, and resources to begin school anew for 2020-21 school year. By that point, this pandemic likely will be behind us and much brighter days will lie ahead.

During this extended time away from on-site school, we encourage all students to be voracious readers, to love books, and to continue the learning process at home while our nation and state grapples with the effects of this global pandemic. Furthermore, this crisis has reemphasized the critical need to expedite the deployment of distance learning tools with the capability to deliver educational content via live video feed. The critical need for reliable, world-class broadband service is a vital element of this educational methodology. We challenge ourselves and call upon all other state and local leaders to facilitate the rapid deployment and/or enhancement of technology infrastructure in the West Virginia public education system with the goal of delivering superior educational content in a distance learning environment.

Working together, West Virginians will overcome this crisis with the strength, resourcefulness, and determination for which we are legendary.

Thank you for your prompt consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Mitch Carmichael, Senate President

Roger Hanshaw, Speaker of House

Roman Prezioso, Senate Minority Leader

Tim Miley, House Minority Leader