



DECLARATION

The State Superintendent recommends that:

- 1) the State Board find, based upon information from the WVDE's Office of School Finance, that extraordinary circumstances exist in Hancock County Schools;
- 2) the State Board assign Nonapproval status to Hancock County Schools;
- 3) the State Board declare a state of emergency exists in Hancock County Schools based upon the information presented;
- 4) the State Board find the conditions precedent to State Board intervention in a county school system exist and delaying the intervention would not be in the best interests of the students or the staff of Hancock County Schools;
- 5) the State Board find that the county board failed to act on a statutory obligation which will imminently interrupt the day-to-day operations of the school system;
- 6) the State Board limit the authority of the county board in areas that compromise the delivery of a thorough and efficient education to its students as designated by the State Board by rule, which may include delegating decision-making authority regarding these matters to the State Superintendent;
- 7) the State Board declare the Office of the County Superintendent of Hancock County Schools to be vacant at the end of the business day 4:00 p.m. on January 16, 2026, and that any existing contracts be voided, if necessary;
- 8) the State Board appoint Walter Saunders to be the Superintendent of Hancock County Schools starting at 4:01 p.m. on January 16, 2026, at a salary to be determined by the State Superintendent;
- 9) the State Board declare the positions of personnel who serve at the will and pleasure of county superintendent to be vacant on January 16, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. and that any existing contracts be voided, if necessary;
- 10) the State Board declare the position of the Assistant Superintendent of Hancock County Schools to be vacant and any existing contracts voided starting at 4:01 p.m. on January 16, 2026 and that such position shall not be filled or replaced in order to conserve resources,

- 11) that the State Board allow the WVDE to provide additional support to assist the Superintendent of Hancock County Schools and staff to address the deficiencies in the operation of the school system;
- 12) the State Board delegate to the State Superintendent the authority to fill positions of administrators and principals with individuals determined by the State Superintendent to be the most qualified for the positions;
- 13) the State Board grant the State Superintendent the authority to take action necessary to correct the extraordinary circumstances;
- 14) the State Board limit the authority of the Hancock County Board of Education as to the expenditure of funds for purchases, the establishment of instructional programs, the operation of federal programs, the delivery and operation of special education, the establishment of policies, county board governance and operational relations, and any other areas designated by the State Board by rule and delegate decision-making authority to the State Superintendent regarding those matters;
- 15) the State Board delegate to the State Superintendent, or his/her designee, the authority to conduct hearings on personnel matters, the referral of investigations to other agencies as necessary, amendment of the Comprehensive Education Facilities Plan (CEFP), school closure or consolidation matters and subsequently to render the resulting decisions, and the authority to appoint a designee for the limited purpose of conducting hearings while reserving to the State Superintendent the authority to render the resulting decision, if needed;
- 16) the State Board limit the authority of Hancock County Board of Education as to the ability to conduct real estate transactions and delegate to the State Superintendent the authority to act in lieu of Hancock County Schools in a transfer, sale, purchase, or other transaction regarding real estate;
- 17) the State Board delegate to the State Superintendent the authority to replace administrators and principals in low performing schools and to transfer them to alternate professional positions within the county at her discretion;
- 18) the State Board delegate to the State Superintendent the authority to fill positions of administrators and principals with individuals determined by the State Superintendent to be the most qualified for the positions;
- 19) the State Board direct the Hancock County Superintendent and the State Superintendent, after consultation with the Hancock County Board of Education, to jointly develop and present to the State Board at a future meeting a set of standards and/or a strategic plan that must be implemented in order for the Hancock County Board of Education to regain control of the school system; and
- 20) that the State Board direct the Hancock County Superintendent to provide written and/or oral progress reports to the State Board as requested.