



1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Building 6 • Charleston, WV 25305
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January 25, 2021

Mr. Miller L. Hall, President
West Virginia Board of Education
Building 6, Room 351
1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Dear President Hall:

Please accept this correspondence as an update to the report I sent you on Wednesday, January 20, 2021. I am very pleased to convey that since my prior correspondence, each of our 55 county boards of education have taken action to provide an in-person option to students. Children are present in-person in every school in West Virginia this week. I remain convinced that providing an in-person instruction option for students is essential to fulfilling our duty to provide an education for all of our children that is both high quality and equitable.

Over the course of the past several months, you have heard me repeatedly discuss the negative impact of remote learning on our children. Even in the best of scenarios, younger children are not developmentally ready to be independent learners. It is the reality in our state that many children do not have adults at home during the day to guide their learning via virtual platforms. We also know that as many as 50 percent of our families lack sufficient broadband access to use virtual platforms effectively. I have heard the voices of frustrated parents across the state who are working full-time during the day and then coming home each evening to work additional hours with equally frustrated children who have not had in-person support from their teachers, counselors, and peers.

But of even more concern to me are the voices we have not heard: the voices of children who have no broadband access, no stable place of residence, and who live in households characterized by poverty and/or drug abuse. It is yet another reality in our state that we have children who have no adult at home to guide them or advocate for them. For those children, a free public education is the best avenue they have to move ahead in life and break the bonds of economic hardship, addiction, and/or social inequity. As the State Superintendent, I can't singlehandedly erase the impact of the many adverse childhood experiences that have plagued our families for generations, but together we can make sure that our school doors are open to every child who needs us.

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In consideration of the data we have learned from our state health officials regarding the safety of our schools and how to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, I fully support the actions of the West Virginia Board of Education. I appreciate your continued leadership and commitment to providing our children with equal access to an equitable education and firmly believe it is our legal and moral obligation to continue to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "WCB", is positioned below the closing "Sincerely,".

W. Clayton Burch
State Superintendent of Schools

cc: West Virginia Board of Education members