

February XX, 2021

Dr. Brabrand and Members of the School Board:

In light of your recent plan to bring students back into FCPS facilities, we would like to advocate that you refocus your efforts toward delivering a high-quality education to all children. While we appreciate that the COVID pandemic is unprecedented, and we do not underestimate your operational challenges, we would like to echo Rachna Sizemore Heizer's recent statement that over the last year FCPS has often not "center[ed] the needs... of the students."

Your Return to School plan formally adopted on February 4 is a step in the right direction, but we believe it represents just the beginning of our recovery. During this pandemic, significant damage has been done to our children's development. Governor Northam recently said that "even if the decision is difficult," offering in-person schooling is needed "to prevent irreparable learning loss and psychological damage." We respectfully offer the following comments:

- **Learning Loss**—Governor Northam has recently advised schools to "provide additional learning opportunities... [which] could include extensive summer classes, remediation, additional instructional time, or even year-round schooling." We believe you should put all options on the table to fulfill your fundamental mission of preparing our children for success.
- **Planning**—We are concerned that other priorities have distracted from sufficiently focusing on "Return to School," and we urge you to concentrate your efforts on remediation on an expedited basis, with a clear plan including a timeline, metrics, and any budget adjustments needed. It is critical that FCPS return our schools to operating in a manner that serves children's needs first.
- **Community Support**—While FCPS has historically enjoyed broad community support, our support is predicated on FCPS' excellence as an educational institution. We believe the fabric of that support is fraying, as evidenced by the fact that FCPS enrollment has significantly contracted. Meanwhile failure rates nearly doubled this year, and in reaction to kids' learning challenges your grading and homework policies eased; we are therefore concerned that current grades may underestimate the scope of the challenge. Repairing the damage done to community support will require you to acknowledge and evaluate the depth of learning loss at all grade levels, in a manner that resonates with the community's experience.

Sincerely,

The Board of the Fairfax County Federation of Citizens Associations

William S. Barfield

William Barfield
President