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C20-318

--In School Committee--
11/17/2020

Ordered:

Whereas the Cambridge Public School Committee appreciates the Governor's ongoing efforts to keep Massachusetts residents safe and healthy during this global pandemic, and;

Whereas Committee Members are concerned about the rising numbers of Covid cases in the Commonwealth, and:

Whereas we are concerned about the academic growth and mental health of our young people, and;

Whereas the School Committee believes that many of our students learn better in-person, and the vast majority need more social interaction with their peers than we are currently able to provide, and;

Whereas the Committee and Superintendent have engaged public health leaders as well as multiple renowned epidemiologists and scientists within our school community to design and implement multiple layers of protection in our school buildings, and;

Whereas to date the Covid cases seen in Cambridge Public Schools have been contracted outside of schools, and;

Whereas we have no control over community spread and emerging science suggests that cumulative exposure leads to contracting the virus, and;

Whereas the limiting of community transmission should translate to fewer cases in schools, now therefore be it;

Resolved that the Committee will send this motion to Governor Baker and the state delegation urging them to implement tighter restrictions, including possible closures, on social gatherings and non-essential businesses before closing schools.

November 17, 2020

Governor Charles
Baker Massachusetts State House

24 Beacon Street, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Governor Baker,

We hope this letter finds you well. Thank you for your ongoing efforts to keep Massachusetts residents safe and healthy during this global pandemic.

We write to you today because we are concerned about the rising numbers of Covid cases in the Commonwealth and request your help managing the virus so that our children can learn in school buildings. Many of our students learn better in-person, and the vast majority need more social interaction with their peers than we are able to provide. We are concerned about the mental health and the academic growth of our young people.

Of course, our first priority is to ensure the physical safety of students and staff. As the body responsible for public education in Cambridge, we have taken a crash course on pandemic-safe schooling over the last eight months. We are fortunate to have multiple world-renowned epidemiologists and scientists in our school community. A number of parents have become advisors to the district. We have turned to these experts, as well as our public health leaders, on topics ranging from air ventilation and PPE to the appropriate mix of metrics for opening and closing school buildings. We believe that the plan we crafted with these advisors - and many more community members - is thorough. We were sufficiently confident in the layers of protection we put in place (e.g. at least four air exchanges per hour in all classrooms being used, masks, physical distancing of six feet, and optional surveillance testing of staff twice per week) to send our youngest learners, learners in substantially separate classrooms, students in sheltered English immersion classrooms, and many staff back into school buildings October 13th. To date, the Covid cases we have seen at school have been contracted outside of our schools.

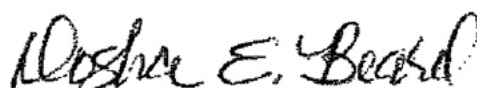
Our scientific advisors would be the first to tell you that we have done our part to minimize the spread of the virus in the Cambridge Public Schools. However, we have no control over community spread. You are on record sharing our belief that children returning to school is top priority (for the children's sake, for their caregivers who need to return to work, and for the economy which relies on the workers). We appreciate the new executive orders you announced to slow the spread, and we implore you to implement tighter restrictions on social gatherings and non-essential businesses. As we watch the long-predicted fall surge begin, please close casinos, gyms and indoor dining before schools. Please remind the public that we all need to wear masks even at small gatherings. Emerging science suggests that cumulative exposure leads to contracting the virus, so limiting community transmission should translate to fewer cases in schools. In other words, our children's health and wellbeing depends upon the community spread slowing, and you have the power to manage this.

We thank you for your consideration and welcome any conversation you may wish to have with us.

Sincerely,

The Cambridge School Committee (and Superintendent?)

A true copy:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doshia E. Beard". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Doshia E. Beard

Executive Secretary to the School Committee

C:

Member Rachel

Member Rojas

Motion # 20-283