

February 22, 2021

Senator Mark Warner
Hart Senate Office Building #703
Washington, DC 20510
Via electronic mail

Re: Request for Funding for COVID-19 Mitigation Measures in K-12 Schools

Dear Senator Warner,

I write as the President of the Fairfax Education Association (FEA) in support of the request for additional school funding to support a safe return to school buildings during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have the support of Safe FCPS, a coalition of parents and educators in Fairfax, Virginia. The request is supported by evidence provided by Smart Restart APS, a coalition of parents and educators in Arlington, Virginia. We expect that the Virginia Education Association (VEA), representing school districts across the Commonwealth will also add their support to this request.

As we all know the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other authorities emphasizes that effective mitigation is key to safely delivering in-person instruction and reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission in schools.¹ Effective mitigation enables schools to open safely, and remain open. We remain concerned that those mitigation protocols are not yet in effect to protect all staff and students in our Virginia public schools, particularly in Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)². Vaccination of school staff is well underway in many of our schools in Virginia, particularly Fairfax County. However, the students remain at risk, as well as their families at home and those in the community, as we continue to experience high community transmission.

The FEA joins the urgent request made of the United States Congress to provide funding for K-12 schools to implement two key mitigation strategies: improvements to air quality and safe dining.

Money should be specifically allotted for these air safety purchases:

- (1) portable HEPA certified air cleaning devices**
- (2) upper-room germicidal UV fixtures, and**
- (3) equipment for outdoor lunch**

Because COVID-19 spreads through the air, proper ventilation and filtration of the air in our schools is a critical mitigation measure.³ Experts recommend at least 5 air exchanges per hour (ACH) for COVID-19 mitigation. (5-6 ACH is “excellent” and 6 ACH is “ideal.”⁴) Too many schools in FCPS — as well as in countless other districts in Virginia and the United States — have aging buildings and HVAC systems that fall far below this standard. Many of the thousands of classrooms in our school district have low air quality. Unfortunately, immediate ventilation upgrades are expensive and beyond the reach of most school districts, including Fairfax.

¹ [CDC K-12 Operational Strategy; Operating schools during COVID-19: CDC's Considerations](#)

² [Airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 to healthcare workers: a narrative review | Coronavirus is in the air — too much focus on surfaces | CDC: How COVID-19 Spreads | Airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2](#)

³ [HVAC systems in the context of COVID-19: first update | Role of Ventilation in Controlling SARS-CoV-2 Transmission SAGE-EMG | CDC Ventilation in Buildings](#)

⁴ [Harvard “Schools for Health” - Guide to Checking Ventilation in Your School](#)

Safe dining is another major challenge for schools during the pandemic. Students eat lunch and breakfast (and sometimes snacks) at school daily. Indoor dining — particularly in communal spaces such as school cafeterias and auditoriums — is widely recognized by public health authorities and experts as a high risk activity.⁵ However, most schools, including those in Fairfax, lack the resources to provide a safe dining environment at school.

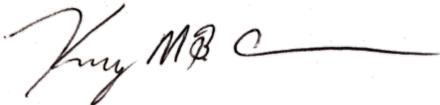
Specifically, please provide funding for:

- (1) portable HEPA certified air cleaning devices**
- (2) upper-room germicidal UV fixtures, and**
- (3) equipment for outdoor lunch**

Schools in Fairfax County — and across Virginia and the United States — need your help.

We urge Congress to provide the funding that K-12 schools need to implement the COVID-19 mitigation measures recommended by public health authorities and experts, so we can open school buildings safely during this pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Adams', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Kimberly Adams
President
Fairfax Education Association

⁵ CDC rates indoor dining “higher risk,” even if socially-distanced: [Considerations for Restaurants and Bars | COVID-19 | Summary of Guidance for Public Health Strategies to Address High Levels of Community Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 | Is Dining Out Safe](#)