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Ramirez, Angelica

Public Comment

LATE DIST

From: Renée Castelo DePaco <renee.depaco@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 8, 2021 1:07 PM
To: Ansorg, Henning; Do-Reynoso, Van; Williams, Das; Hart, Gregg; Hartmann, Joan; Adam, Peter; Lavagnino, Steve; Miyasato, Mona; sbcob; senator.limon@outreach.senate.ca.gov
Cc: cmurillo@santabarbaraca.gov; KSneddon@santabarbaraca.gov; EFriedman@santabarbaraca.gov; OGutierrez@santabarbaraca.gov; MJordan@santabarbaraca.gov; algutierrez@santabarbaraca.gov; mharmon@santabarbaraca.gov
Subject: Fwd: School closure

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Hello,

Almost seven months have passed since my last email on the same subject. While our district is operating an in-person hybrid program, we are still looking at 8 hrs per week *at best* of in-person academic instruction (11 hrs total per week on campus, 4 days a week) for our elementary school children. This is specific to the Hope School District - I will note that our neighboring district, Goleta, has managed to come up with a model that provides 15-20 academic in-person hours per week, and over 26 total hours per week on campus, 5 days a week.

Parents are being told that the biggest barrier to reopening to a full-time schedule is the 6 foot distance requirement. Researching this particular parameter, I find much gray area. Some guidance suggests 6 feet except where it is not possible after a good-faith effort has been made, which then allows that distance to reduce to 4 feet. If we can't utilize outdoor spaces or expand into communal space because we lack funding for the credentialed manpower to meet the additional cohorts, what are our options? What is considered a good-faith effort?

As a state, how do we reconcile activities like amusement parks reopening while our children are still being deprived of their legal and civil right to a public education, despite months of scientifically proven success? Masks, temperature checks, health screenings - they all work. My preschooler had his first runny nose in a year last month - a miracle!

As parents, we've had no choice but to meet every roadblock that has presented itself. We've cut our work hours, organized outside learning, shared the load with other parents, paid for additional childcare, whatever it takes. If I - a person with financial means, family support and work schedule flexibility - am seriously struggling, how are the most vulnerable populations faring? What about the children with little to no supervision, support, or whose homes themselves are toxic environments?

What can I do? How can I be expected to be assured that schools will be back full time in the fall when many of the same barriers will still exist? I am asking for real, actionable steps that I can take to affect change.

Thank you for your time,
 Renée Castelo DePaco

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Renée DePaco** <renee.depaco@gmail.com>

Date: Sun, Aug 16, 2020 at 10:39 PM

Subject: School closure

To: <henning.ansorg@sbcphd.org>, <van.do-reynoso@sbcphd.org>, <DWilliams@countyofsb.org>, <ghart@countyofsb.org>, <jhartmann@countyofsb.org>, <peter.adam@countyofsb.org>, <steve.lavagnino@countyofsb.org>, <mmyasato@countyofsb.org>, <sbcob@countyofsb.org>, <assemblymember.limon@assembly.ca.gov>

Cc: <cmurillo@santabarbaraca.gov>, <KSneddon@santabarbaraca.gov>, <EFriedman@santabarbaraca.gov>, <OGutierrez@santabarbaraca.gov>, <mharmon@santabarbaraca.gov>, <MJordan@santabarbaraca.gov>, <algutierrez@santabarbaraca.gov>

Hello, I'm writing to express my concerns about the continued closure of schools.

I have four young children, three of whom are in elementary school and one in preschool. My youngest child has been back in preschool since the facility reopened in June. My three older children have attended various summer camps during the same time frame. All of these activities have been carefully controlled - with temperature checks, health questions at drop off, and masks - and have gone off without incident.

As a parent, I would be letting my children down if I didn't advocate on their behalf for their education and social/emotional well-being. It's difficult for me to reconcile that a basic right to education is being withheld while bars and restaurants continue to operate with far fewer safety measures in place to protect the vulnerable in our community. Children are at the lowest risk for Covid transmission and susceptibility, yet are being deprived of the most during this time.

There are certainly alternatives, and as a parent who is constantly in touch with other families as we all try to figure out how to navigate the school situation while trying to work, it is apparent that those with the financial means are all set hiring tutors for their children, or sending them to other paid daycare programs/fall camps that inexplicably are permitted to operate while they essentially offer the same thing a school would: a place for children to go together during the day with health safeguards in place - the only difference being that it costs money vs public school. We aren't all so fortunate. I consider myself lucky to have some of these paid options available to me, but I shudder to think of the families that don't. The gap will just get wider. ***This is directly harming our children in a tangible, measurable way.***

If we could look to the success of our Santa Barbara community's summer camp programs and daycares that have proven so far that we can safely educate and supervise our children while at the same time protecting our teachers and staff, why shouldn't we do our very best for our children?

I urge you to ***please*** push back on the Governor's order and stand up for our children's right to safely gather and learn.

Thank you,
Renée Castelo DePaco

Sent from my iPhone

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Renée DePaco
415.850.9505