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July 17, 2020

The Honorable Greg Abbott
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott,

Northside ISD, the largest public school system in Bexar County and fourth largest in the State of Texas, thanks you for your leadership during this challenging time of uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As publicly elected officials ourselves, we empathize with the daily decisions you and your staff are facing as you navigate through determining what is best for Texans to keep them healthy and safe. The decision to reopen schools this fall is one that impacts millions of Texans. As you have stated, COVID-19 infections are affecting Texas communities differently and the "one-size-fits-all" approach is not practical or effective.

We, along with our superintendent Dr. Brian Woods, implore you to allow school boards the **flexibility and discretion** to govern and oversee the reopening of our schools. We will continue to work closely with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and local health officials using data from stakeholders as part of the decision-making process. Our Northside ISD "Family" is literally trusting us with the lives of our students and employees. Therefore, we believe that the following changes should be implemented:

- **Allow** the Northside ISD Board of Trustees, together with our superintendent, the **flexibility to govern the school openings and/or potential closings of our schools and include the types of instructional models and methods** necessary to meet the needs of students. Specifically, we need the flexibility to determine which schools can open, the type(s) of online instruction, in-person instruction and/or hybrid approaches.
- **Permit** the Northside ISD Board of Trustees, together with our superintendent, **the ability to set any timelines** associated with school openings and/or closings and transitions between both. This will assist in adapting quickly and effectively to changing circumstances. Specifically, we need the ability to determine the start time and length of time for the instructional options as determined by multiple data sources including local health officials' information and staff and stakeholder input.
- **Provide** the Northside ISD Board of Trustees, together with our superintendent, **the necessary revenue and expenditure discretion to manage the district's budgets. Specifically, we request no loss in our revenue for the next budget cycle and reimbursement of additional expenditures resulting from COVID-19.** This would mean that we would not need to contemplate reductions in staffing or other budget cuts this fall at a time when students and their families will need more support from their schools than ever before. We also request **full reimbursement** of the costs to implement the public health challenges that have occurred and will continue to impact district budgets.

On behalf of our over 106,000 students, families, and employees, we appreciate your consideration of these much needed adjustments to school reopening guidelines. As elected representatives of the Northside ISD community, we are aware of the urgency to get kids back into the classroom. However, additional flexibility, funding, and oversight will give us the tools to make the right decisions to achieve the goal of **safely and effectively** opening our schools. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Dr. Carol Harle, President

Karen Freeman, Vice-President

Joseph H. Medina, Secretary

Gerald B. Lopez

M'Lissa M. Chumbley

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