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July 31, 2020

Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH
Local Health Authority - Harris County
2223 West Loop South
Houston, TX 77027

David Persse, MD, FACEP, FAEMS
Local Health Authority - City of Houston
8000 N. Stadium Drive
Houston, TX 77054

Dear Drs. Shah and Persse:

Yesterday morning at my request, I met with members of your staff along with Klein ISD Director of Health Services, Yvonne Clarke, RN to discuss my significant concerns regarding the 2020-2021 school year. I appreciate Dr. Maria Rivera and Dr. Sherri Onyiego taking the time to meet with us, and I thank your entire department for your work on behalf of all of us in the greater Houston area.

As the leader of a public school district with more than 54,000 students and 7,000 employees, as I mentioned in yesterday's meeting, I am calling on Harris County Public Health to give us a reachable goal that includes objective and reasonable metrics so that we can work together to get our students and staff safely back in school. It is imperative that this reachable goal is clearly communicated to us so that we can understand how decisions are being made by the public health authority and so we can feel confident in safely bringing our students and staff back together on campus for teaching and learning and for extracurricular activities.

We depend upon our state and local officials and our public health officials to provide clear and understandable guidance that allows us to do the intricate planning that is necessary to provide an education to our students and to provide a safe environment for that education to take place. I understand that you do not yet believe it is safe for children to return to the classroom in Harris County at this time. I respect your expertise with regards to public health, and in turn, I ask that you respect mine with regards to public education when I plead that the children in Klein ISD deserve the best education we can provide, which certainly includes the provision of a safe, on-campus learning environment.

Our students have not been in a normal school setting since March, and as educational leaders, we need to better understand **when and how** you believe children can be safely returned to school. We need to be provided with the specific metric(s) that will allow us to open our school doors safely to students and staff. We need this information for preparation, for training, and for our community's overall health, educational, and economic well-being as well as supporting and communicating your decisions or recommendations.

All of us have been on a roller coaster through these challenging months as we follow the various, and at times conflicting, guidance of state and local officials and federal public health officials. Since the initial COVID-19 shutdown, educators and families in my district worked diligently to provide

continuity of instruction during emergency and altered operations for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. As we looked forward to the 2020-2021 school year, we carefully planned for various scenarios, aware that the scenarios were condition-based and subject to any mandates and orders from state and local officials. Daily changes of our plans have become the norm, and we are working around the clock to plan as best as we can for our students while trying to keep our employees and community informed. Many of the decisions we make go beyond just opening our doors or not. Families must rearrange their schedules, find child care, and make their own very difficult decisions.

For example, in early July, the Texas Education Agency shared that virtual learning opportunities would be funded provided school districts offered an in-person learning experience for students who required or desired it. *We welcomed the opportunity to safely return to our schools and the ability to provide choice to our families.* With health and safety always at the core of our commitment to students, employees, and families, our plans for in-person instruction included the thoughtful development of responsible health and safety protocols based on public health guidance including social distancing, hygiene, and other preventative measures.

In recent weeks, as you are well-aware, Harris County school superintendents were informed first in a letter sent to us on Monday, July 20, 2020, that it was unsafe to reopen schools to in-person learning, and then on Friday, July 24, 2020, that the Local Health Authorities for Harris County and the City of Houston ordered a Joint Control Order thereby ordering schools in Harris County to offer only virtual instruction and no on-site extra-curricular activities through September 7. This was met with relief by some and considerable disappointment by others.

For this reason, again, I am respectfully requesting that you provide a reachable goal based on an objective, reasonable measure(s) that we can review and evaluate regarding when we can open school doors to our students, staff, and families. It is untenable to be placed in a situation where our local health department issues public health recommendations and orders that impact and potentially disrupt our ability to provide the best possible public education for every student without transparently sharing the specific metrics by which such recommendations and orders are issued. Additionally, we cannot communicate the rationale for such recommendations and orders effectively with our employees and families with limited information and very limited collaboration and input regarding plans to safely reopen our schools. We simply wish to work together so we can plan, so our families can plan, and so we can feel confident in safely bringing our students and staff back together for on-campus learning and activities again.

I appreciate your ongoing efforts and consideration of my request. As previously offered, if there is any way I can assist your offices as we all continue to manage this unprecedented crisis, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jenny McGown
Superintendent

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cc: Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo
Mayor Sylvester Turner