

PFT COVID-19 Update 7-22-20: PPS Reopening Vote- AFT Outcry- Covid Crisis - HEROES- - links

CORONAVIRUS Updates

REMINDER: PPS Board Vote on School Reopening Today.

If you missed the PFT member alert this morning, remember: The **PPS Board of Directors is taking a vote on the mode of reopening of school during the 4:00 pm Legislative Meeting today.**

[View the Livestream event in progress by clicking here.](#)

ALSO: The vote on the Safety Plan to go to PDE is set for August 4th.

WHAT MATTERS MOST
ADVERTISEMENT
Safety, not recklessness, must drive school reopening

Randi Weingarten, President American Federation of Teachers

Teachers want to get back to their classrooms with their students. We know the limits of remote instruction and the harm of prolonged isolation for students. We know that children feel lonely, bored and stressed when they're in school in person, and that public schools need 20 million kids a day, in normal times, to have 75 percent of AFT members pulled out of their classrooms returning to school if public health safeguards like spacing, personal protective equipment, deep cleaning and ventilation aren't in place. We are not waiting for a vaccine. But, as coronavirus cases surge, we are insisting that officials not reopen school buildings without appropriate conditions and protocols in place.

Reopening America's 80,000 public school buildings doesn't happen with an all-caps tweet or an ultimatum from the president. Instead of offering guidance or support to reopen schools safely, the Trump administration stands in the way. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should "stand in the way" of reopening schools. That's reckless and wrong. Science tells us the best way to open schools is the CDC's five blueprint.

Unlike Education Secretary DeVos, the AFT has been planning for a return to school since school buildings closed in March. In April, we released "Plan to Safely Reopen America's Schools and Communities," which is based on science and public health protocols as well as educator and healthcare expertise—and on parents' or school staff.

Our plan details the conditions essential for schools to reopen. First, average daily community infection rate among those tested for the coronavirus must be very low. (New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo has required the rate not to exceed 5 percent for at least 14 days.) Second, schools must employ public health protocols, including 6-foot social distancing, masks, deep cleaning and handwashing stations. Third, adequate resources must be available to enact these safeguards, including funding for additional staff, guidance counselors and teachers to reduce class size.

But as the United States debates reports for new coronavirus cases, and Congress fails to provide the resources necessary to get back to school safely, there are important hurdles to returning to school buildings safely in the next few weeks. That's why school districts like those in Los Angeles, San Diego, Atlanta, Palm Beach County (Fla.) and Houston have been forced to make the difficult decision to start school remotely this year.

Reopening public school buildings doesn't happen with an all-caps tweet or an ultimatum from the president.

States and localities have been the frontlines of combating this crisis, but their resources have plunged because of the economic shutdown, and expenses have increased because of the fight against the coronavirus. They not only need funds to provide essential services, the average school will need an additional \$1.1 million, or \$2,200 per student, to open its doors safely—that's \$116 billion we need from the federal government for states and schools. But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell took the Senate out on vacation without voting on the HEROES Act, which would provide needed funds.

Trump is postponing opening schools, but he's not doing so to protect students. No wonder a majority of American parents said it is okay for schools to reopen in the fall, including regarding across partisan lines to also taking teachers with health risks, or whether family members at risk, to consider leaving the profession. We could face a "burnt coast" of the worst moment kids need their teachers most.

Many Americans have wondered what would happen if Trump issued a sense of urgency, and how we know. Trump had abundant resources at his disposal to fight the pandemic—public health experts, agencies and equipment all ready to be deployed. Instead, he downplayed the threat and called it a hoax. He treated the pandemic as a culture war, refusing to wear a mask, calling it the "Chinese virus," and tweeting that he supporters should "bless" states postponing schools.

Those shutdowns were meant to buy Trump and the country time to bring the pandemic under control—and get protective equipment where it was needed, such as getting testing and flattening the curve of infections. But Trump wasted precious time with his reckless, impulsive response. The sacrifices people have made—losing financial hard-ship and missing important moments in life, from graduations, to weddings, to being with a loved one in their final moments—were squandered by Trump's incompetence.

Other countries show that it is possible to prevail over the coronavirus—to in fact, preserve livelihoods and return to daily life. Not in the United States, then, are we PFT members, states, and national testing strategies, and Trump says Americans should "bless" the states in their decisions. Officials need to act, but their actions must be based on science and driven by the common good. That is the only way to get back to school and back to work.

Participated in Our AFT Roundtable on School Reopening, July 8

REOPENABLE ON SCHOOL REOPENING

FOLLOW RANDI WEINGARTEN: TWITTER: @randiweingarten, YOUTUBE: @randiweingarten

The National Message on Reopening From AFT President Randi Weingarten.

In the New York Times and elsewhere recently, Randi has emphatically called on officials in the U.S. to follow the lead of countries that have prevailed over the coronavirus—and to act based on science and the common good.

[Click to view or share the article image.](#)

This article echoes and amplifies the PFT's previously stated, emphatic belief that safety must come first in reopening considerations.

[Click to read the article on the AFT website.](#)

The Green Phase and Understanding the National COVID Crisis.

This graphic is a helpful single page reminder of what it means for all PA counties to be in the green phase.

COVID-19 REOPENING

GREEN PHASE

CONGREGATE & WORK SETTINGS	SOCIAL SETTINGS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TELEWORK MUST CONTINUE WHERE FEASIBLE • BUSINESSES WITH IN-PERSON OPERATIONS MUST FOLLOW UPDATED BUSINESS AND BUILDING SAFETY REQUIREMENTS • ALL BUSINESSES OPERATING AT 50% OCCUPANCY IN THE YELLOW PHASE MAY INCREASE TO 75% OCCUPANCY, EXCEPT WHERE NOTED FOR BARS AND RESTAURANTS • MASKS ARE REQUIRED IN BUSINESSES • CHILD CARE MAY OPEN WITH GUIDANCE • CONGREGATE CARE RESTRICTIONS IN PLACE • PRISON AND HOSPITAL RESTRICTIONS DETERMINED BY INDIVIDUAL FACILITIES • SCHOOLS SUBJECT TO COMMONWEALTH AND CDC GUIDANCE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INDOOR GATHERINGS OF MORE THAN 25 PROHIBITED; OUTDOOR GATHERINGS OF MORE THAN 250 PROHIBITED • MASKS ARE REQUIRED IN ALL PUBLIC SPACES • RESTAURANTS AND BARS OPEN AT 25% CAPACITY FOR INDOOR DINING • ON-PREMISES ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION PROHIBITED UNLESS PART OF A MEAL; COCKTAILS-TO-GO AND CARRYOUT BEVERAGES ARE ALLOWED • PERSONAL CARE SERVICES (INCLUDING HAIR SALONS AND BARBERSHOPS) OPEN AT 50% OCCUPANCY AND BY APPOINTMENT ONLY • INDOOR RECREATION AND HEALTH AND WELLNESS FACILITIES (SUCH AS GYMS AND SPAS) OPEN AT 50% OCCUPANCY WITH APPOINTMENTS STRONGLY ENCOURAGED; FITNESS FACILITIES ARE DIRECTED TO PRIORITIZE OUTDOOR FITNESS ACTIVITIES • ALL ENTERTAINMENT (SUCH AS CASINOS, THEATERS, AND SHOPPING MALLS) OPEN AT 50% OCCUPANCY • CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY MAY RETURN TO FULL CAPACITY WITH CONTINUED IMPLEMENTATION OF PROTOCOLS
	<p>IMPORTANT</p> <p>ALL BUSINESSES MUST FOLLOW CDC AND DOH GUIDANCE FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING AND CLEANING</p> <p>MONITOR PUBLIC HEALTH INDICATORS, ADJUST ORDERS AND RESTRICTIONS AS NECESSARY</p>

We stay here (green) by following the rules—plain and simple. [Learn more about staying green by clicking here.](#)

The primary reason is all around us—and all across the country. With the nation reported cases of COVID-19 on a record-breaking pace, it's important to understand nationwide which states are faring well and which aren't—and equally important, to know why certain states are in such dire straights and some are not. *Hint.* It has to do with reopening early and not unilaterally wearing masks.

Until the map of the CDC Covid data tracker is completely light yellow like the extreme northeast and parts of the western US, we've got a lot of work to do. [Click here to view the CDC tracker.](#)

Tell the Senate: Support the HEROES Act. Don't Forfeit our Futures.

The Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act, known as the HEROES Act, provides valuable resources for testing, tracing and hospital support to help ensure we can reopen safely, and provides critical funding for our states, cities, towns and schools.

The Senate is now back from vacation. Yes. Vacation. Contact your senator and congressional rep and tell them to get to work now.

Learn more about the HEROES act, what it does, and how you can make a difference:



AFT HEROES Act Toolkit: https://www.aft.org/heroesact?link_id=2

[Write To Your Senator Here.](#)

[Find Your Representative Here.](#)

Information Links That Bear Repeating:

Below please find additional links providing helpful information you can bookmark and count on as the COVID-19 situation changes and evolves.

[AFT/AFTPA Coronavirus Resources & Updates for Members](#)

[AFT/PFT Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) A Negotiated, Free Benefit to Members

[Click for EAP Information Flyer](#)

[Click for Life Skills Solutions Website](#) (login upper right)

[National Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) Coronavirus Resources](#)

[PPS Coronavirus Resources and Links](#)

[PA Department of Health Coronavirus Resources](#)

[PA-Specific Resources from Senator Casey](#)

[Student Debt Relief Resources](#)



Coronavirus Self-Checker

A guide to help you make decisions and seek appropriate medical care

[Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) Rumor Control](#)

[Allegheny County Health Department Rumor Control](#)

**** PFT Coronavirus Updates Released Weekly ****

Missed an update or message? [View our archive of COVID-19 Updates here](#).

Please keep in touch—keep sharing your ideas, your questions and your concerns.

In solidarity—

Nina Esposito-Visgitis
