



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

December 15, 2020

The Honorable Lawrence Hogan
Governor
State House, 2nd Floor
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Hogan:

As we approach the end of a long, arduous year, the arrival of the first doses of Covid-19 vaccines in Maryland provides much-needed hope. While there is a lot of work to do at both the state and local levels to plan for vaccine dissemination across Maryland, we in Baltimore County look forward to working with you on this critical endeavor. As you continue to plan for statewide vaccination efforts and determine how to prioritize different categories of individuals, I write to request that you include public school educators among your essential worker priority groups.

As you are aware, the majority of public school students in Maryland have not stepped foot in a classroom since March. This has caused significant disruption for hundreds of thousands of families. It has exacerbated mental and emotional health challenges for teachers and students. It has made it difficult for some parents to remain employed. And it has allowed students who have struggled – academically and in other ways – to fall further behind.

In Baltimore County, these struggles have been exacerbated by a devastating cyberattack, putting an additional burden on our students, educators and parents who have already experienced so much this year.

We can all agree that in-person learning is best for students, best for families, and best for the economy at large.

At the same time, educators across Maryland have expressed valid concerns about returning to in-person instruction. With community spread currently occurring at a high level statewide, and with a record high number of Covid-related hospitalizations across the state, it is reasonable to question the safety of returning to our school buildings.

As elected leaders, we have a responsibility to balance these dueling priorities of getting our children back in school and protecting the health of our educators.

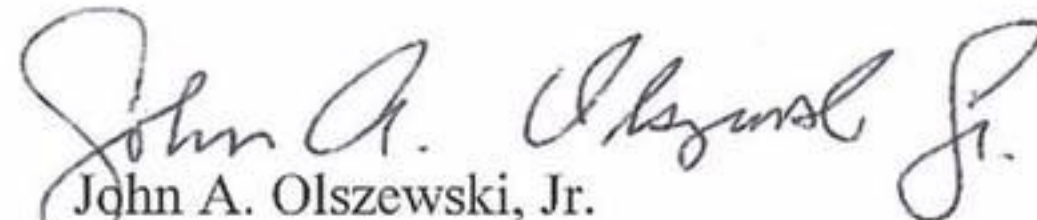
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It is why I partnered directly with school principals to direct \$11.5 million of Baltimore County CARES funding to equip schools with personal protective equipment, air purifiers, Plexiglas barriers and other supplies meant to keep our students and educators safe. **Now that we have a vaccine, we can further address both priorities more quickly by ensuring that educators can receive vaccinations so that schools can reopen for in-person instruction.**

I understand that there are many competing interests in determining how to prioritize vaccine distribution, but the well-being of our state's children must always be a top priority. As a former Maryland public school teacher, I take our responsibility to our kids, our educators, and our parents seriously.

By ensuring that educators are considered essential workers for the purposes of vaccine prioritization, we can get our children back where they belong – in classrooms, face to face with their teachers.

Sincerely,


John A. Olszewski, Jr.
Baltimore County Executive

cc: Dennis R. Schrader, Acting Secretary, Maryland Department of Health