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November 4, 2020

The Honorable Richard Corcoran
Commissioner, Department of Education
Turlington Bldg., 325 W. Gaines St., Ste. 1514
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

Dear Commissioner Corcoran,

As the members of the Medical Advisory Committee serving The School Board of Orange County, Florida (Orange County Public Schools), we are writing on behalf of the students, staff, parents, and community members of Orange County, Florida.

Our committee was formed to advise our School Board leaders to the best of our ability on current best-practice recommendations to keep students, families, teachers, school staff, and community safe during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Through our collaborative efforts, our school district, which serves over 200,000 students and over 25,000 employees, has maintained a very low COVID-19 positive test rate among those students and staff who are attending our campuses in face-to-face settings. As of this writing, we have seen 706 total positive confirmed cases including 446 students, 247 employees and 13 visitors/vendors. This low number of positive cases is not due to a lack of infections in our local community, cases of COVID-19 are currently rising. Instead, the Medical Advisory Committee credits this success to the remarkable efforts on the part of our students, teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents who have been adhering to strict protocols and procedures in the school setting, including social distancing, wearing masks, handwashing, consistent contact tracing, disinfecting, and improved ventilation, and the cohorting of student groups. These protocols and procedures have been most effective in large part by many students and families opting for virtual learning (approximately 58% of the student population).

As experts from a diverse array of medical subspecialties (infectious disease, emergency medicine, pulmonology, primary care, developmental-behavioral pediatrics, and nursing), we strongly recommend that the virtual option continue to be available for the duration of this school year in order to continue to offer the safest environment for our students and teachers. We believe that having a virtual school platform for the entire 2020-2021 academic year is a medical necessity for many of our students, especially those who have underlying medical conditions that would place them at high-risk for significant morbidity and mortality from COVID-19. It is also an academic necessity given that, as the spring semester begins, we still

anticipate requiring periods of quarantine or isolation as our students and faculty are exposed to COVID-19. Without a virtual platform, students' ability to access their curriculum and make effective progress would be significantly impacted.

We ask that you consider the voice of those who have the well-being of our students as a top priority: parents, educators, staff, and physicians. We seek to advocate for our students as well as our community. We well know the negative ripple effects to our community members if schools are mandated to be entirely face to face.

Our Medical Advisory Committee stands at the ready and will continue to serve and advise our School Board. Should you have any questions of us, please do not hesitate to reach out. Thank you for always putting the safety and wellbeing of our students, the future leaders of our state, first.

Respectfully submitted,



Vincent Hsu, MD MPH
Medical Advisory Committee Chair
Epidemiologist and Infection Prevention
AdventHealth

Medical Advisory Committee Members:

Akinyemi Ajai, Pediatric Pulmonologist, Children's Lung, Asthma, and Sleep Specialists
Adriana Cadilla, Infectious Disease, Nemours
Brian A. Harris, Behavioral Developmental Pediatrician, Orlando Health
Omayra Mansfield, Chief Medical Officer, AdventHealth Apopka/Winter Garden
Michael Muszynski, Professor Emeritus Clinical Sciences, Florida State University
Annette Nielsen, Pediatrician, Tree House Pediatrics
Darcy Ravndal, Nurse Practitioner, Healthcare Providers of Florida
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Regan Schwartz, Chief of Emergency Medicine, AdventHealth

C: State Board of Education