

# GARRISON FOREST SCHOOL

300 GARRISON FOREST ROAD • OWINGS MILLS, MARYLAND 21117

Dear families,

We wrote earlier this week to provide an update to Garrison Forest's response related to the novel coronavirus, now referred to as COVID-19. As mentioned in that communication, the situation and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) continue to evolve rapidly, and our goal is to keep our community as informed as possible as things develop.

To that end, we wanted to update you about plans for GFS-sponsored Spring Break trips to India and Greece/Spain. After consultation with state and federal experts, as well as our peer schools, and out of an abundance of caution, we are canceling both of these trips. While we are disappointed by losing the opportunity to take these trips, we do feel this is in the best interest of keeping our students and chaperones safe. International travel introduces many unknowns, including the possibility that regulations could change while we are en route and potential trouble getting back into the country. We are making this decision given the uncertainty of how this virus and travel restrictions will progress over the coming weeks.

In the next few days, we will be reaching out directly to families of students who were scheduled to travel on these trips regarding finances. We are working with travel companies and airlines to recoup as much of the cost as possible (potentially including airline vouchers), and the school is prepared to reimburse families for any gaps between what was paid and what is being reimbursed by the travel companies.

We want to stress that the risk remains very low to our community right now. Thank you for your understanding as we continue monitoring the situation on a daily basis and making decisions we feel are in the very best interest of our entire community. As always, the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff is our top priority.

We have recapped the information shared with you earlier this week below and will continue actively monitoring the situation, providing any updates as needed.

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## **SPRING BREAK**

With Spring Break nearly upon us, we want to ensure that our students, faculty, staff and parents who may be traveling over Spring Break take proper precautions.

### **For community members planning to travel during Spring Break:**

- Be sure you [check any restrictions put forth by the country you'll be traveling to](#) before you depart and continue monitoring the situation throughout your travel. Have a back-up plan in case your arrangements are suddenly interrupted due to changing restrictions.
- As far as we know, no members of the GFS residential life community will be traveling to countries designated as a Level 3 or 4 Travel Risk by the CDC. To accommodate students who experienced a disruption in travel plans, some of our dorms will be open and supervision will be provided throughout Spring Break.

## Returning to the US/GFS:

- Any student or faculty/staff member returning from an international or domestic trip with a potentially contagious condition should consult their physician immediately and should not return to campus until given the all-clear.
- Though unlikely, any community member who knows or is concerned that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 is required to report that upon re-entry into the United States. Please note that the US has a mandated quarantine period for those who may have been exposed to the virus.
- Our Health Center has briefed our faculty and staff on signs and symptoms of the virus. Any students with questions or concerns once they arrive back on campus should visit the Health Center to speak with a medical professional.

## STAYING HEALTHY

Again, the risk to our community for COVID-19 is currently small; however, this is a good time to revisit common sense guidelines for avoiding all types of contagious illnesses. In addition to this virus, the flu is especially prevalent this year, so we encourage our entire community to keep their health top of mind. Habits like thoroughly washing your hands regularly, covering up coughs and sneezes, disinfecting high-touch surfaces and remaining home if you don't feel well will go a long way in reducing the spread of any illnesses.

## STAYING INFORMED

While we are actively monitoring this situation on a daily basis, we encourage all of our community members to do the same in order to keep themselves healthy and make informed decisions about their own travel and plans. Keep an eye on reputable news sources to ensure you have the information you need. Here are a few resources:

- [COVID-19 information for Travelers \(CDC\)](#)
- [World Health Organization: Coronavirus](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions: Guidance for Schools About the Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [White Paper developed by PRA Health Sciences](#)

## SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

Our goal is to inform, not alarm. With near-constant press coverage and the rapidly changing nature of the situation, many people may be feeling anxious, including your children. If you are looking for productive ways to discuss the virus with your child, please see this [New York Times article](#) and this [USA TODAY article](#) for guidance.

As we mentioned in our previous communication, the wellbeing of our entire school community, physical as well as emotional, is always at the forefront of everything we do. As a school that is proud to have an international student population, we will also be ensuring that our students from areas most affected by this situation feel supported throughout a period that is very concerning for them and their families. I encourage all of our community members to be mindful of this as well.

Don't hesitate to contact me, your Division Head or our Health Center if you have any questions or concerns.

Warmly,

Chris Hughes  
Head of School



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