



BH Responds to Dr. Brown of Chambers County Health Department

August 5, 2020

Chambers County Health Department released a statement today "suggesting" the schools in Chambers County consider altering their current plans. We certainly respect Dr. Brown's right to an opinion, but it is disheartening and frankly surprising that at such a critical time as this, he is basing his suggestions on "hunches." The letter states that schools' safety plans may not be enough. He offers no data to back up this claim and in fact hasn't done his homework to even KNOW what all our safety plans are. He further states that opening schools makes it likely inevitable that there will be a new wave of exposures. "Likely inevitable" is not a medical term based on data. The good news is the Barbers Hill ISD Board strives to make child-centered, data-driven decisions.

However, the fear-mongering intent of the letter becomes more evident when he implies local hospitals are near capacity. This is an exaggeration at best and once again, no data supports his claim. Additionally, he attempts to undermine a data-driven report from the nation's leading medical authority, the CDC, which strongly encourages in-person learning. He quotes the report as saying that in-person learning should only be done in communities where transmission is low. Again, this is a misrepresentation. The report is enclosed for anyone who wishes to peruse it. It clearly states that in-person learning should only be curtailed in areas where the spread is at its worst and uncontrolled. Chambers County is absolutely not at that stage. Finally, Dr. Brown states that schools should wait until Sept. 8 to have in-person school. To make such a recommendation, one would hope there is data to support it. However, once again it seems a hunch, as there is no data to support his statement; and how can anyone possibly know what the situation will be Sept. 8?

Barbers Hill ISD was the first district in history to hold a Bond Election in the midst of a pandemic. We had a record turnout and a record approval, and zero negative health consequences. We then safely held a traditional Graduation & traditional Summer School. We did achieve these activities to the benefit of students because our staff has been working practically around the clock to develop safety protocol that IS based on data. I realize the tone of this letter is strong, but this letter from Dr. Brown, who resides in Harris County, seems similar to the politically-motivated maneuvers currently occurring in that county. Our Board and Leadership trust our parents' ability to make the right choice for their child, and our Board and Leadership are committed to sparing absolutely no expense to protecting our students and staff. We will continue to make child-centered decisions and not be swayed by politically-motivated fear tactics. We fully understand the fear and apprehension that exists and commit to do everything within our power to safely achieve the essential task of education!

Greg Poole