



# Administrative Offices

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September 3, 2020

Dear Norwich Families and Staff,

I am writing to you to clarify a message contained in an August 14, 2020 correspondence to Governor Lamont from Senators Looney, Dougherty-Abrams, Anwar, Kasser, Kushner and Moore regarding the opening of schools in Connecticut. In the letter they reference, "Norwich Public Schools immediately closed in person summer school due to an outbreak (of COVID-19)." As Superintendent, I know that information to be incorrect. I called Senate President Pro Tempore Looney and informed his staff of the error. This morning, with the assistance of Norwich Senator Cathy Osten, I was able to talk with the author of the letter, Senator Doherty-Abrams. Senator Doherty-Abrams apologized for the mistake stating that she inadvertently wrote "Norwich" when it should have been "Norwalk."

A copy of the original correspondence, an email from Senator Doherty-Abrams and a copy of the media coverage which correctly named the Norwalk School Department are attached.

I am so sorry if this error caused any worry or concern. I am thankful to our faculty who brought the error to my attention. I wanted to get to the bottom of it and address it with you promptly.

Sincerely,

*Kristen E. Stringfellow*

Kristen E. Stringfellow, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

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E-mail Correspondence from Sen. Mary Daugherty Abrams:

Dear Dr. Stringfellow,

Please accept my apologies for the error in the letter sent to the Governor regarding school reopening. The letter states "...in July, Norwich Public Schools immediately closed in person summer school due to an outbreak"; it should have been Norwalk Public Schools.

<https://patch.com/connecticut/norwalk/norwalk-high-school-closed-after-positive-coronavirus-test>

Again, I am truly sorry for any problems my typographical error has caused. I wish you and all of your students, teachers, administrators, and staff a healthy, successful school year. If there is anything else I can do please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,  
Sen. Mary Daugherty Abrams



Connecticut General Assembly  
SENATE DEMOCRATS

Legislative Office Building, Room 3300  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591

August 14, 2020

Governor Ned Lamont  
State Capitol  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Lamont,

We are writing to express our grave concern over the decision to open schools. Due to your leadership our state has made incredible progress in minimizing the impact of Covid-19. This progress has not come without consequences, however, your commitment to prioritizing public health and your courage in following the science has benefited us greatly. We ask that you again follow the science by making the courageous decision in the interest of public health to postpone opening our schools.

We understand that the impact of the pandemic on our children's education and social-emotional well-being is significant. However, health and safety must always be the first priority. Although children are currently considered a low risk group, the long term health effects for those that do contract the virus are still uncertain. We must use the utmost caution when exposing our children to conditions that you have determined unsafe in other settings.

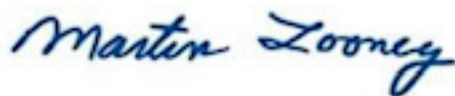
It is evident that schools will not be able to meet the CDC guidelines with regard to social distancing and cohorting, wearing masks, use of PPE, testing, and contact tracing. From the bus rides to the classrooms and throughout the buildings, our children will not be able to adequately distance nor will these spaces be disinfected on an ongoing basis. Students will be required to wear masks, however, their ability to comply will be inconsistent at best. We have already heard from staff with concerns about the availability of PPE for everyone. There is currently no plan for testing or contact tracing nor is there a plan to respond to an outbreak. In addition, the poor ventilation systems in many of our schools increases the likelihood of spreading the virus in these environments. Until we can do so safely, we should not require our children and educators to return to in person school.

This virus has caused us to confront the inequities within our educational system; we are a state of haves and have nots. We appreciate your efforts to provide every student with the technology needed to access their education whether through distance learning or in person school. We support these efforts and are also committed to ensure that every student in Connecticut receives

an equal opportunity to be educated. Unfortunately, opening schools is not the answer. Given the numbers of educators who will not be returning to in person school, it is questionable as to who will be delivering the instruction. Given limitations in adhering to CDC guidelines, it is questionable as to the type of instruction students will receive in the classroom. Given that only those with means will have options, we will still be a state of haves and have nots. We must ensure that all students have equal access to education by providing the necessary resources for innovative distance learning throughout this pandemic and beyond.

Community spread is inevitable when our schools open. We have only to look at the outbreaks that already occurred in our state, country, and around the world to know this is true. Most recently, a "mini surge" in infections in Greenwich was attributed to a teen party and in July, Norwich Public Schools immediately closed in person summer school due to an outbreak. In Georgia, a summer camp was closed when almost half the staff and campers tested positive for the virus. Schools in Israel were shut down only two weeks after opening due to Covid-19 outbreak. We must learn from these experiences. We must not put our children and educators in harm's way. We must not create the conditions under which a resurgence is inevitable.

We are a small, densely populated state which leaves us particularly vulnerable to community spread of the virus. Knowing this you wisely made determinations regarding the opening of business rather than leaving it to local government. The decision to open schools is no different; it should be a statewide decision because the results will have an impact on us all. Therefore, we ask that you reexamine your decision, keep schools closed, and put all of your efforts into supporting effective distance learning for all of our children.



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Martin M. Looney  
Senate President Pro Tempore  
State Senator 11<sup>th</sup> District



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Mary Daugherty Abrams  
State Senator 13<sup>th</sup> District



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Saud Anwar  
State Senator 3<sup>rd</sup> District



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Alex Kasser  
State Senator 36<sup>th</sup> District



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Julie Kushner  
State Senator 24<sup>th</sup> District



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Marilyn Moore  
State Senator 22<sup>nd</sup> District