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May 1, 2020

The Honorable Tom Wolf  
Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Room 225, Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

On behalf of Pennsylvania's students receiving special education services, we are writing today to urge you to allow in-person special education services during the yellow phase of the Commonwealth's reopening.

On April 9, 2020, you closed all public school entities due to the COVID-19 pandemic for the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year. Numerous states also ordered their K-12 schools closed for the academic year or until further notice. Six states ordered their K-12 schools closed through May: Connecticut (5/20/20), Maryland (5/15/20), Montana (5/6/20), New Jersey (5/15/20), New York (5/15/20) and Wyoming (5/15/20); and at this time have not announced whether these closures will expire at the given date or be extended to the end of the academic year.

Even though Pennsylvania's school entities are closed, students are still entitled under federal law to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). Many public schools are struggling with how to comply with these federal requirements in light of school closures. While numerous schools are attempting to provide special education services through alternative means, it is simply not enough to replace the in-person services that these children need. Extended school year (ESY) services are individualized special education services such as academic support, occupational therapy, speech therapy and behavioral therapy. It is included in some Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to help students to achieve and prevent regression in order to meet FAPE requirements.

As outlined in your three-phase plan, when a region eventually moves into the less restrictive yellow phase child-care centers will open; however, secondary schools will remain closed for in-person instruction. Our constituents have brought to our attention this decision could have a devastating impact on our students receiving special education services and their families because the virtual learning set-up does not work for them. They are concerned a continued

prohibition of in-person access to education for many special-needs children across the Commonwealth could result in our most vulnerable students being left behind.

We write to encourage you to permit our public schools to reopen over the summer to allow programs such as extended school year (ESY) to provide valuable and irreplaceable in-person special education services, subject to appropriate health precautions and measures.

Sincerely,



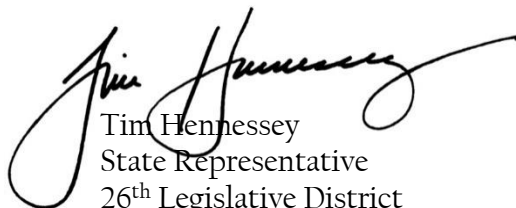
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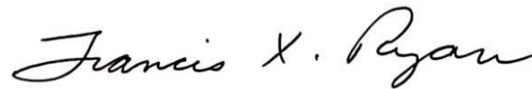
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cc: Secretary Pedro Rivera, Department of Education