



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

December 21, 2020

Tim Walz
Governor
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Governor Walz:

We are seriously concerned that your past and recent guidance relating to the closure of schools do not rely on the most up to date, data-focused metrics that would allow all Minnesota schools to reopen and continue to provide a nation-leading quality education. While we appreciate your announcement to give elementary schools the option to return to in-person learning on January 18, 2021, we believe that more should be done to both promote and encourage a return to in-person learning.

The closure of schools around the state, enabled by your Executive Order 20-99 and the 2020-2021 Safe Learning Plan, has devastated our children's access to education, our state's learning community, and the parents who rely on our educational institutions to provide their children a quality education and the means to be able to go to work on a daily basis. As recently reported in the state, schools nationwide have reported alarming rises in students failing classes. This detrimental impact has been felt even more strongly among English language learners, disabled students, and disadvantaged student. More specifically, in our state's capital, failing grades for high school students stands at 40 percent, twice the amount of a typical year.

In late October, only weeks before your order, a Brown University study of 227,000 children in all 50 states found that the infection rate was just 0.14% among students and 0.25% percent among staff. Even in high-risk areas of the US, student rates of infection were under 0.5%. Based upon this data, the academic deterioration that has resulted from hybrid and distance learning must not be allowed to continue. Not only will Minnesota's children suffer with lasting impact, but we will also continue seeing parents struggling to return to work, hampering our economy.

If a data-driven approach to stop the spread of the virus were applied to schools, we should see hundreds of thousands of children return to an in-person educational setting that has proven to be a more effective learning environment. In Minnesota, there have been 389,171 positive coronavirus cases. 10,769 of those cases have been reportedly associated with PreK-12 buildings, and 68% of affected buildings have only reported one case.

These numbers do not suggest that schools have been a hub for COVID-19 transmission. We urge you to use this data, the same that has been used to shutter certain industries, to encourage and promote in-person learning for all ages across Minnesota.

Sincerely,



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress



Jim Hagedorn
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



Senator Paul Gazelka
Majority Leader



Senator Michelle Benson
Deputy Majority Leader



Rep. Kurt Daudt
Minority Leader