

Anne Arundel County Board of Education Meeting | January 14, 2021

Due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency, Board meetings are currently being held virtually and in compliance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

Times for agenda items are intended as guidance only.

The Board may choose to change the order of agenda items to meet the needs of the Board. Unless changed by the Board, items occur in the order listed.

Board Members

Melissa Ellis
President

Dana Schallheim
Vice President

Candace C.W. Antwine

Robert Silkworth

Corine Frank

Joanna Tobin

Michelle L. Corkadel

Drake Smith

Upcoming Meetings

Budget Workshop

Tuesday, January 19, 2021
6:00 p.m.

General Board Meeting

Wednesday, January 20, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Policy Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 20, 2021
2:30 p.m.

Budget Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 20, 2021
4:45 p.m.

6:00 pm 1. Opening/Recognition

- 1.01 Invocation
- 1.02 Pledge of Allegiance
- 1.03 Establish Agenda Order

6:15 pm 2. Public Comment

The Board will hear public comment on agenda items from up to 10 speakers per agenda item during this section of the meeting. Those wishing to provide live testimony may register, space permitting, at www.aacps.org/boardtestimony. All speakers will be allotted 2 minutes. Written comments on agenda items can be submitted to boardoffice@aacps.org. The process for submitting such comments and comments on non-agenda items, which are only accepted in writing, can be found at www.aacps.org/boardtestimony.

6:35 pm 3. Action

- 3.01 2020 - 2021 Reopening Plan
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Key: (I) Information (A) Action (R) Review

Information on agenda items can be obtained from the Board of Education Office (410-222-5311) or at www.aacps.org

The following testimony was submitted for the January 14, 2021, meeting of the Board of Education. The “...” designation indicates the cutoff of testimony due to it exceeding the word the limit. The full version of such testimony has been provided to the Board.

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED FOR 2020-2021 Reopening

1. Hello from a parent of 2 in Anne Arundel County Schools. One is in high school and the other is in a special center.

First, thank you. I'm happy with the revised schedule. My high schooler will, hopefully, really benefit from a more personal experience.

On the reopening of schools, I think it should depend on the coronavirus numbers being below a certain metric, whether that be 5.0 or 10.0. Also, an agreed to "high metric" that will return schools to all virtual.

I've read that certain teachers have found this method to be a nightmare, but can we try hybrid to start? I think it would be ideal for students. Now that the virtual education experience has gotten so much better, maybe we could even stay hybrid, depending on how the teachers like/hate it.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Mary Zabora

South River Cluster

2. Dr Arlotto and BOE members,

Please leave science and health decisions up to the experts. As I write this, our county case rate is over 50. AACPS cannot be compared to smaller counties or private schools. We do not have the means to keep all of our children and staff safe and healthy. Currently, NONE of your students, families or staff are at risk, because of the decisions you have made as a BOE to keep us safe! That is amazing! Let's keep that trend going! Do you want to be known as the BOE that was responsible for widespread illness and death or be known as the BOE that made the safe choice to reduce the risk to all?

Virtual learning has been a blessing to so many! Students have settled into routines and have made connections (which will be broken when our classes are torn apart due to a hybrid plan). The hybrid plan will reduce the interactions students have with their teachers and staff since two days a week, they will spend their time watching the teacher walk around the "T Zone" trying to assist the in person students, while trying to socially distance.

The hybrid plan, while well thought out, is not only "messy", it will not fill the academic gaps that COVID-19 has put on us. It simply creates a logistical nightmare to please a portion of the community.

Thank you

Kassie Haney, Pasadena MD

1st grade Teacher (Northeast cluster)

High School Parent (Chesapeake cluster)

3. Hello,

Stop. Stop this insanity. Stop the heartache and stress you are bring to families and children with this constant back and forth. The BOE voted to leave it up to the superintendent Dr. Arlotto right?

The metrics show that it is not safe.

Stop jerking families and children around just for your own power hungry desires.

Will the BOE be meeting in person or virtually? When will the BOE meet open to the public?! ?? ... ?

Put some skin the game by actually leading. Show everyone it's safe. I know better though, you won't. You won't lead by example.

All these games for some of you to grab some headline spotlight.

Michael Kessler

Arnold Elem. Parent

4. Dear Dr. Arlotto and Board Members,

I currently have 2 children enrolled in Anne Arundel County Public Schools, one at South River High School and one at Central Middle School. My husband and I both work full time. There is no amount of written testimony that can accurately demonstrate the dire situation that my children and other AACPS students are currently facing. Therefore, I am pleading to all AACPS board members, administrators and County Officials to visit our home in order to fully experience a day of virtual schooling and see firsthand how inferior and unproductive it is and how my children are just withering away into introverted, unmotivated human beings, which seems to be worsening on a daily basis. The achievement gap is widening every hour that our children must stare into a computer screen, click some buttons, watch videos and end up teaching themselves the material. The negative and profound effect on their mental health is not even something I can process at this point. Arundel County Public Schools continues to reiterate a single goal: "To ensure that every student meets or exceeds standards as achievement gaps are eliminated", however, this seems to be a slogan that has been long forgotten. Anne Arundel County Public schools MUST do better by their students. The AACPS motto of Elevating All Students, Eliminating All Gaps is being completely ignored.

I don't work in the medical field, but one thing I know is that a virus is here to stay. They do not go away and now that there is a vaccine, there must be an end game or resolution for this situation...

Respectfully,

Kimberly A. Pratta

Edgewater, MD

5. I am both a parent of an elementary student and an AACPS employee living in Pasadena. COVID has uprooted our lives in ways I never imagined but through it all I believe we need to trust our health experts and their recommendations.

I work at multiple schools ranging from special Centers to elementary and high schools as an Occupational Therapist. I worry about how I will safely do my job going from school to school, classroom

to classroom, working with some of our most at risk students, with the rates as high as they are currently.

As so eloquently started by so many other parents AND employees, I adamantly encourage the board to follow the metrics and trust Dr. Kalyanaraman. I firmly believe he is committed to returning students, teachers, and staff to classrooms when it is safe to do so.

Everyone's priority, especially the board of education, should be the ongoing efforts to decrease the community spread of COVID for the safe reopening of schools. The only way this happens is if we ALL listen and follow the recommendations of our health experts.

Thank you

Christine Duda

6. Good Morning Ms. Schallheim and Ms. Ellis-

I live on the Broadneck Peninsula so wanted to address this to you, Ms. Schallheim, as my representative to the board. I'll be brief in my support for moving forward with giving parents a choice in their children's education by allowing for the hybrid option in February (not March), as I know this topic is flooding your inbox. I have two children at Broadneck Elementary (grades 1 and 3) and they need to return to in person learning not only for the benefit of their education, but for their mental, emotional, and social well being. My key points below:

- Proceeding with giving parents an option to keep their kids learning virtually or hybrid (2 days per week) is the only option where EVERYONE gets a choice
- Parents get to decide what is best for their child/ren and teachers/staff can file accommodations if they have a medical or child care reason to not return to the school building
- Millions of children across the country (even NYC) have been back to school with little/no issues. Most/all of my friends who live in other states have their children in school with no issues.
- Based on the fall 2020 hybrid survey results, with less than 30% opting for hybrid (although this didn't include anyone who didn't respond as they were lumped in the virtual all year) that would mean at Broadneck Elementary, my children would be in class with only about 6 students. That tells me this can be done safely--- masks, plexiglass, handwashing, spacing/distance in the classroom--- all the things we have been told by the CDC significantly reduces the spread of COVID19....

Nicole Rice

Arnold, MD

7. Dear Board of Education members,

I am the parent of a 1st grader at Central Elementary in Edgewater. I am writing to express my concerns about the potential reopening of schools. At the most recent board meeting, Dr. Kalyanaraman recommended that schools not reopen at the current metrics and delay the decision until March when educators have had a chance to be vaccinated and we see the impact on our surging case numbers. I agree with him and strongly urge the board to listen to him and the science behind his recommendations!

My other concern is the parent survey that is to be sent. I am in favor of a hybrid return when the metrics and Dr. K say it is safe, but am unable to make that decision until I understand how the decision to reopen is being made. The survey must define a clear plan, including metrics and conditions under which the schools will open before parents are asked to make a choice involving the rest of the school year!

Thank you for your willingness to listen and consider these important points!

Sincerely,

Amy Speed

Edgewater, MD

8. My name is Jenifer Endlich. I've taught in AACPS for 15 years. This is my 20th year overall. I am urging you not to reopen schools until teachers have been vaccinated. Many of us, including myself have worked hard to avoid becoming sick while still giving our students the best of us. To go back now and risk health when a vaccine is so close, seems so reckless. I have two children and they are doing well with virtual learning and both said they do not feel comfortable going back, so I'll indicate that on my survey. What about me? I can't opt to not come back. I don't have a reason for an accommodation. I'm 42 and healthy. That doesn't mean Covid won't kill me, or my husband, or my kids. Just last week, my 15 year old daughter's best friend was in the ICU at Children's Hospital in DC with blood clots in her lungs. She had to have two surgeries to blast them out. She lived. She almost didn't. She goes to a private school in AACo. For several days, I woke up every morning with her on my mind and prayed so hard for her and her family. Covid can take a healthy person. I'm scared and want my vaccine before returning with students. Thank you.

Jenifer Endlich
Millersville Elementary
2nd grade teacher

9. Dear Board of Education members,

As a teacher in the South River feeder system, I am deeply concerned that there is consideration to open schools given our current metrics. The metrics are triple what they were in the fall when this board deemed a hybrid re-opening unsafe. I know there has been increasing pressure to reopen schools, but I just can't understand how metrics can be disregarded at this time. Dr. Kalyanaraman was adamantly against the reopening of schools prior to staff having the opportunity to receive a vaccine. As a teacher who has underlying conditions I applied for an accommodation and have yet to hear back on the status of my accommodation request. Will teachers' accommodations be addressed before a reopening of schools? I realize that this pandemic has caused a lot of stress and upheaval in our lives, but we must do everything to mitigate the irreprehensible effects of this virus. I personally have lost friends and family members to this deadly virus and I want to do everything in my power to spare another family from this heartbreak. I stay awake at night worrying about the decision I will be forced to make between a job I have loved for over 17 years or the health of myself and my family. I implore this Board to adhere to the advice of our health officer Dr. Kalyanaraman and only consider reopening when it is safe to do so.

Lorretta Freeman

ACC Teacher

Central Middle School

10. AACPS need to reopen now; please do not continue to "kick the can down the road." The Board has had almost one year to plan how to properly educate our children and train teachers how to do so in a virtual environment. It is evident that AACPS had failed to do so. Students are not learning and their physical, emotional, and mental health is suffering from the current environment. Millions of children nationwide are attending school in-person at least on a part-time basis. There is no reason that AACPS cannot do the same except for a lack of planning and training.

My son is in 9th grade "at" Crofton High School, a brand new high school that is unoccupied. Normally a good student with very good self esteem, his emotional health is suffering. He now hates school and had a mental health crisis two weeks ago. Now he is seeing a counselor. He also has a tutor in one subject for one hour a week. The tutor teaches him an entire week's worth of lessons in that one hour and he is now achieving high marks in that class. The teacher, on the other hand, posts a video for the "teaching" and assigns homework. A second tutor is also being considered. I have observed that many of the teachers do not know how to fully utilize the on-line technology which causes additional stress for the students. For example, they instruct the students to fill out Google forms for the class/homework but the forms are locked, and therefore the students have to request that the teacher unlock the forms or the students have to create a new form...

Sincerely,

Kathleen Ferte'

11. Dear Sirs:

As a grandparent of a student, parent of a teacher, former volunteer at Freetown and Jacobsville Elementary Schools, and an "at risk" taxpayer in Pasadena, I strongly object to a return to the classroom in this school year because it will lead to avoidable deaths. The case rate in Anne Arundel County at this time exceeds 50 per 100,000 and is expected to continue to rise until the end of January. Putting half of the students and their teachers in a confined space for an extended period four days a week will only result in more community disease and death. Studies show that about 60 percent of persons without symptoms are positive for the disease, unknowingly infecting others. To return to the classroom in February is hugely irresponsible.

Anita Heygster, Pasadena

12. While I know it's a very difficult situation, I am opposed to students going back to school in-person given the current COVID rates in Maryland and in our county.

Anne Arundel County earlier today moved to the number ONE spot in the COVID case rate in the state. This is a time when we do not want to be number one. Given these statistics, as well as the current state of the vaccination plan (or lack thereof), it would be reckless to send students back until more of the community has been able to be inoculated and our health care system is not being taxed.

Governor Hogan has moved the most vulnerable group of citizens down the vaccination list. High risk individuals, which comprises many parents and grandparents in AA County, are now the second to last group to be vaccinated. These are the same individuals that more likely to experience serious cases and require hospitalization. We are currently at 84% capacity – putting these individuals at risk through

their own kids and grandkids – will put even more pressure on the healthcare system. We all know mental health is a struggle for people during this time- including our children who are suffering. Imagine the mental health toll when a child is responsible for the possible infection and serious illness or death of their parent or grandparent because we were pressured to act before it is safe.

Statistics have shown that in college towns that opened up to in-person teaching, the infection rate in the surrounding community was elevated...

Sincerely,

Mary Kay Waugh
Mom of a junior at SRHS

13. My name is Tamara Beger, an Odenton mother of 4 AACPS students. Please consider these points for the reopening plan:

1. For schools to reopen there need to be strict health protocols and procedures set, and anyone who wants to send their kids to school needs to be willing to follow them. The school system and individual schools should enforce these protocols and procedures. If families are ready to send kids back, they need to be ready to do what it takes to keep our communities safe. I would feel more comfortable sending my children back knowing that policies are set, firm and enforced, and that families and staff are held accountable to follow them.

2. Prioritize getting smaller, needs-based groups of students into the classroom. A needs assessment conducted with teacher input can help decide who needs to get into the building first. Then as the COVID numbers hopefully decrease and our metrics are lower, stagger bringing in other groups of students (for example, Prek/K and seniors). This will help maintain social distancing and keep our students and staff safe.

Please create a clear plan with policies that follow county health guidelines for a safe school reopening and that prioritizes getting small, needs-based groups back into school buildings.

14. Dear Board Members & Dr Arlotto,

It blows my mind that I even need to write to you to plead with you to continue to follow the recommendations put forward by Dr K and the AACO Department of Health. Back in October and November when the board last considering reopening was the last time we were remotely close to 10 cases per 100k. Today, we sit just below 60 cases per 100k. Our county is adding 400+ cases per day. Our state is adding 3k cases per day. The country is over 300k cases per day. Local hospitalizations are higher than ever. How can you look at the data and even consider reopening?

It is completely and utterly irresponsible that this is even up for consideration at this time.

Are there children struggling with virtual learning? Yes. Do kids miss socializing? Obviously. But how can

you put the health of children, teachers, staff, and administration at risk during the height of a global pandemic?

It's been almost a year. I get it. People want normal. But that's not how this works. We don't just forego science and selfishly resume our lives. If we do, we just continue to increase cases and put everyone at risk.

You may hear people say:

- But kids are playing together at home.
- But kids go to stores
- But families travel
- Etc.
- If they do all these things why can't they go to school?

Well not everyone is doing these things. My family has taken this seriously. My kids do not play with their friends...

Sincerely,
Diane Milleville
Parent
Piney Orchard

15. Thank you to the board for having a meeting to address the AACPS plan to return our children to school. My name is Loubna Presley and my daughters are in 5th and 7th grade in the Arundel feeder system. You have consistently heard how the virtual learning environment is not working for many in our county. My daughters have struggled to remain engaged. My middle schooler is having an especially hard time staying focused, navigating her eight classes, ensuring all work is completed and then submitted. The various modalities, and applications while great in theory are very overwhelming to keep organized as an adult, let alone an adolescent. I can't even begin to describe the difficulty we are having with her foreign language (Chinese). Her academic, emotional and social state have suffered.

We must get **all** of our children back to school, not just those in elementary. Arundel Middle School already has their students assigned to cohorts, called teams. The only intermingling is with electives which can occur in larger classroom spaces.

I respect that not everyone feels comfortable with going back to school. Everyone's personal story is different. Those parents and students have the option of remaining virtual. I'm not trying to take their choice away. I am advocating for my daughters to even have a choice.

Case numbers will decrease, and we can no longer afford to be reactive, we must be proactive.

16. My name is Lindsey Hemelstrand, I am a mother of twin kindergarteners who attend Folger Mckinsey Elementary, in Severna Park. I am writing to be a voice for those you have failed. I am one of the privileged few who has had the flexibility and financial security to maintain virtual learning. Although working and trying to provide consistent assistance to my children has been nearly impossible and emotionally unhealthy for all in my household, I am fortunate that my employer has been extremely flexible, my community has come together, and we have food on the table.

You are in a position, however, where you see those that are less fortunate than me. Our economy is designed so that legally, parents must send their kids away to school every day. Without acknowledging the importance of this is shameful. How are those people dependent on this system supposed to maintain an income in this environment? How are they supposed to provide computers, WIFI, heat, food? How many students didn't have these "luxuries" before and now are even worse off? You know there's a digital divide yet you do nothing! What about the families that must work and have to leave their children to be responsible for virtual learning with no help and alone at home? These children are being neglected. You are privy to this information. How do you sleep at night knowing you could be helping these people, but you are not? **You sight your metrics, but they are myopic. There is so much evidence suggesting that re-opening schools is safe...**

17. Hello AACPS Board Members,

This email is to express my support for students returning to school for the 2nd semester. I am a parent of 4 AACPS students, 2 at West Annapolis Elementary School, 1 at Bates Middle School and 1 at Annapolis High School.

I am aware of the Covid surge and am still in favor of returning to in person learning. Virtual instruction is a poor substitute for in person instruction and I am seeing the results of this first hand within my household.

Thank you,

Gennene Parker

18. This testimony was sent October 2020. Here I am, three months later, advocating for students to be given a choice to return to in-person learning.

No more talking- give a timeline for going back to the buildings ASAP. Present the secondary parents with that level's plan immediately. Use a commonsense approach (not just Dr. K's metrics) and recognize that when masking, limiting size of cohorts, and hand hygiene is enforced, school and community transmission is limited.

Remember who you are helping with a return to school- the thousands of students with IEP's and 504's helped in the classroom environment; the students that teachers need to lay their eyes on, because they have not seen these children and their condition since March; students who do not have adult support at home or the quiet virtual learning environment that some parents have created for their children. I could go on listing students who might need this return to school, because the number of AACPS students' needs are infinitely growing by the day.

The hybrid plan is not for the children who are not doing well virtually (they can stay virtual)- it is for those that are not doing well, who have NEEDS that can't be met outside of the classroom and only in the classroom environment. This is what the hybrid plan is offering, despite being far from perfect and the WANT of parents to have a specific teacher or a plan that is ideal.

Please give parents and students this choice.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Fine

Parent to two secondary students in the Crofton cluster

19. Dear Board Member,

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. This email is in support of returning to in person learning. I know you have received many emails on this matter.

I want to reiterate that the BoE has already an approved reopening plan (Nov. 4, 2020). The current plan will work however, metrics being used must be finalized. Metrics need to be based on public health metrics, not on staff vaccinations, which could take months. I also strongly believe that ALL GRADE LEVELS deserve the chance to return to in person learning!! We just want a choice!!

I have several secondary school age family members in both NY state and Florida state who are back to school either hybrid or full time. They were all given the choice. Those school systems and school boards have found a way to make this work!! There is no secret to this!! I am so disappointed in AACPS for not making this work. I am a mother (and a nurse) of a 9th grader at Crofton High School and a 7th grader at Crofton Middle School. These kids need to be back at school in some capacity, even if just two days a week. We know it will not be normal for a while, and that is okay. On another note, Crofton High School is already at 50% capacity, why not make this school a model for returning back to school??? There also needs to be a reopening plan developed for middle and high school...

Thank you.

Rose Lasek

Crofton High School Feeder

20. From: Lori Cann, Parent of children at Solley, George Fox and Northeast

As a mother of three children in the Northeast HS feeder system I ask you to begin the in-person schooling in February 2021.

I have a career that I cannot do from home. I have sacrificed my job status and compromised my financial health so that AACPS could take the necessary steps to re-open school buildings. To keep them closed any longer will put my family in extreme personal and financial peril.

I have made sacrifices for the past nine months with the belief that I would be able to recover without too much lasting damage. But it is unreasonable to continue to place hardworking families in this situation.

I cannot resume my career, one that I trained for and worked hard for, until my children are back in school. My 4th grade child cannot be left home alone, nor are there child care options for a middle school aged child. An 11-year-old should not be left home alone.

Are we mothers just supposed to not work indefinitely? My bills and my mortgage have not changed. How are these bills to be paid?

This is also a matter of personal dignity as a person, as a woman, and as a working mother. Working people contribute to the economy and reduce costs to the county and state.

I ask that you open school buildings to in-person schooling.

Regards,

Lori Cann

21. Dear Members of the Board of Education,

I have been teaching in AACPS for 13 years, come from a family of AACPS educators and have a niece who attends Arnold Elementary. I am writing tonight to beg you to prioritize the safety of our students and your staff, from teachers to bus drivers and everyone in between. All of the recent local COVID reporting shows that our infection rate is far too high to bring students and staff back, even with a hybrid plan. Even if our case rate was lower, educators are still waiting for an agreed upon, specific and enforceable safety plan. It is very hard to feel I can trust my employer to protect my and my student's safety when that same employer has been unwilling or unable to negotiate a safety MOU, something TAAAC has been pushing for since we for closed in the spring. I know you are receiving pressure to reopen schools, but please stick with the science. Please follow the recommendations of Dr. Kalyanaraman. Wait for the vaccine to help bring down the case rate. Rushing a return to physical school will only jeopardize lives and further disrupt student learning as we deal with the inevitable quarantines and lack of staff coverage. Thank you for your service to our students and our school system.

Robin Beers
Annapolis Resident
Marley Middle School Teacher

22. I have written before & am writing again. Please open all schools for in person instruction NOW! There have been dozens of legitimate, scientifically-sound studies demonstrating that schools are NOT super spreader areas and that in person instruction CAN happen safely. Why isn't the BOE looking at other states & jurisdictions that are successfully & safely teaching students in person so we can learn from their best practices & get AACPS students back in the classroom???. Consider the dozens of studies demonstrating the significant emotional harm isolation & NOT being in school is doing to our children! There is an entire generation of humans that is being left behind.

I have a formerly straight-A, three sport high school athlete laying on her bed, apathetic to EVERYTHING!

PLEASE get her back inside the classroom, with in person instruction NOW!

Hold AACPS accountable to the taxpayers that pay their salaries and to the students that you are supposed to be "elevating"!

Respectfully,

Shannon Ballard

South River Cluster

23. From: Erica O'Neil, Crofton Middle AND High School

"Reopen AA county Schools"

I feel strongly that the schools-ALL levels, need to have a plan to reopen ASAP. I would like a reopening plan voted on and enacted for both middle and high school levels. I have 2 daughters that are struggling with the virtual learning and the HOURS upon hours they spend in front of a computer. They are very social people and the oldest one has been diagnosed with depression and anxiety and we have been struggling with paying for a weekly therapist to help her. We are at our wits end as parents in trying to help her navigate this current situation. The therapy is costly, \$120 every week...out of pocket. If they could return to school they would have a reason to get up out of bed, talk and interact with other kids their age and enjoy learning from their teachers directly. They would honestly be so excited. My younger one cries about wanting to "Just be back in school, Mom."

Additionally, their learning needs are not being met as discussed in a google meet call with the Crofton principal. She informed us that the kids are receiving half the numbers of lessons and that they may not be academically ready to advance to the next logical class level. I have to bright young ladies that would like to take AP courses and to have the principal tell a large group of parents that the kids aren't getting the quantity and quality of instruction thru virtual learning points to the inequity in our county's plan...

Erica O'Neil

24. Dear Esteemed Board Members:

I write to you this evening as a concerned parent, teacher, and community member. I find the idea that you are considering opening school buildings for hybrid learning on February 2nd to be extremely reckless and irresponsible.

Currently in Anne Arundel County our case rate is at the highest it has ever been. Much higher than what the numbers were when we closed back in March 2020. Our hospitals are so overwhelmed that they are having people spend multiple nights in the ER because they do not have real beds for them. Their morgues read that again, their morgues, are FULL. At present our hospitals are at 85% capacity and our healthcare workers are overworked and exhausted. If we were to return now not only are we risking the health and lives of teachers, students, school staff, etc. but we are also adding to the burden and strain being placed on our healthcare system. A system that will buckle and break of pushed too hard. I ask you, is appeasing one or two squeaky wheel constituents worth killing 1, 2, or more children? Teachers? Secretaries? Household members from your community?

If it is not safe for you to host in person meetings with a small community audience how is it safe for hundreds of students to share space in a school building? We want to return to school but only when it is safe to do so. Not when things are worse than ever. Think humanely not politically.

Sincerely,

Kelly Falloni

Teacher, Parent, Pasadena Community Member

25. Dear Esteemed Members of the Board:

I'm writing as the parent of middle and elementary schoolers in the North County cluster, and as someone who has multiple family members who have had covid19, including my middle schooler... please DO NOT reopen schools until a plan has been established that aligns with the county health department's recommendations, that is clear and unchanging in the metrics used, and that continues to include a virtual option for those who want it. It is inconsiderate to continue to keep parents on edge and force them to make decisions with incomplete information. And it is irresponsible to even discuss opening until case rates have dropped and all teachers and staff that desire to have been vaccinated. Hold true to the motion to abide by the metrics set forward by Dr K and delay opening until it is safe and well managed!

Sincerely,

Kathryn Palmer

Glen Burnie, Maryland

26. To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Gina Senkowski.

Please include the following in the testimony log for the BOE Meeting 1/14/2020:

I am the parent of Central ES students (4th/1st grade) who is in favor of a return to in-person learning. We are a military family. My kids are usually able to form new connections and make friends through school/activities. The absence of these things has resulted in depression, anger, personality changes, and a lack of enthusiasm for "attending" school from two bright, curious, resilient kids who are voracious readers and have always complained about days off school. They cry every day, the first grader usually multiple times, out of anger and frustration. I've debated sending audio recordings so you can hear/feel the anguish in their cries.

The fact that this county has been unable to formulate a basic plan for in-person learning is indefensible and unacceptable. The AACo rate didn't hit 15 until 11/3/2020. What happened between March and then? I have friends across the country and world whose kids have been in school, some of them full-time, since August with limited episodes of classroom closures/quarantines and no dead or hospitalized students, teachers, or support staff. Spread has not been shown to be driven by schools. The student/staff populations are relatively low-risk, and it has been demonstrated that in-person learning is not only possible, it can be and has been done safely (without vaccines). If you can't come up with a plan, borrow one from somewhere else. History will not be kind to the decisions this county has made for our kids.

27. Dear Members of the AACPS Board of Education,

I want to thank the AACPS Board of Education for their decision to remain virtual until case rates are at a level that is safe to return. I know this decision has not been easy, but the decision has kept our hospitals from becoming overwhelmed and saved lives.

I hope that the Board of Education will continue to follow the advice of county health experts. At the last board meeting Dr. Kalyanaraman made it clear that opening at this point would

pose a health threat to our community. With a case rate of over 50 per 100,000 and hospital beds at 97% capacity now is not the time to open schools in Anne Arundel county.

To protect our greater community Dr. Kalyanaraman asked the board to postpone opening to the beginning of March. By that time all staff should be vaccinated and the return to school will be much safer and less costly for our community. With the vaccine there is finally a safe end in sight. I urge the board to follow Dr. Kalyanaraman's advice to keep our students, staff, and greater community safe and healthy. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin Wolfe

Severna Park

28. Dear Board of Education members,

My name is Jessica Moore, and I live in Arnold, Maryland. I have two children, in 4th and 6th grade.

Let me start by saying that you have a difficult job. There are no right answers. And in the current climate of our country, it is even harder. That is why we need to follow the guidance of doctors and scientists when choosing the best course of action for our children AND staff of our schools. The decision to open should be based not on politics, but on actual data and recommendations from Dr. K.

My children are not thriving in their school work, so I definitely want them back in the classroom with in-person teaching, but that doesn't override the health and safety of the children or the staff around them at school.

Making me choose to either send my kids on 1/29 or go virtual all year is unfair because I want them to go to school. But 1/29 is not the best choice.

The numbers are more than triple that of the fall when it was decided to keep the kids virtual. And with the new variant of the virus making its way around the country, sending the kids now would cause too many disruptions. Many schools around the country have to close/open/quarantine/open/etc. This back and forth, inconsistency is not the best for our kids.

Please listen to Dr. K. Wait until March. Wait until the teachers can get vaccinated. Wait until the numbers go down. Make a plan to reevaluate the date at the end of February.

Also, please come up with a precise plan that addresses those who need help the most...

Sincerely,

Jessica Moore

29. I live in Odenton and have 3 children who still attend schools in Anne Arundel County. As much as I'd love for my kids to be in school, now is not the time to consider a return. The numbers are far higher than they were when the decision was made delay sending kids in the fall. The health department has

established metrics that they believe are acceptable for a gradual return to schools. Please keep those in mind, as well as the health of the greater community.

Jen Blanford

30. Dear AACPS Board of Education Members

I am parent of a high school student at Severna Park High School and I implore you to act to reopen Anne Arundel County Public Schools safely and effectively for **ALL** AACPS students.

You have an affirmative obligation to provide parents **the choice to return** to in-person learning for **ALL** grade levels as soon as possible. You already approved a reopening plan on Nov 4, 2020 and it does not need to be changed. However, it **MUST** include **ALL** grade levels.

You must be very clear on the metrics required to implement the plan. You must set forth a timeline for reopening that is based on public health guidelines, as well as other metrics affecting our children (e.g., mental health, academic health, college competitiveness, etc.). Vaccination is important, but it cannot be a metric for returning to in-person learning, because the timeline for vaccination is unclear .

Please instruct AACPS to use all available resources to implement **safety measures** for our teachers, staff and students. Some examples used in other school districts across the country are: testing for teachers and students and/or daily wellness check surveys. No option should be off the table and all resources (time, money and personnel) must be used for this effort.

As the parent of junior in high school, the disadvantage you have placed my child, and so many other AACPS high schools students in, must not continue. Our high school students are competing with students in other districts/states/countries academically, athletically and in extracurricular activities; please recognize the life altering effect the inaction of AACPS has had...

Thank you

Karey McDonough

31. Board of Education,

I would like to express my concerns on the current debate about reopening Anne Arundel schools. The first thing I would like to see is a clear plan for reopening. A plan where the date of reopening is based on data and recommendations from the county health department. I do not believe any schools should be open when the community spread is as high as it currently is. I do not believe that the BOE should be ignoring the recommendations of the health department. The thought that the BOE would even consider opening right now has completely eroded my confidence in the BOE.

Also expecting parents to commit to a "survey" when a clear plan has not been presented on reopening is unacceptable. If a "survey" is going to be done, then make it an actual survey, collect more data, listen to the health experts and develop a plan. THEN ask parents to make a decision. If the plan is to continue with the current "survey" please include a choice to go back when the health metrics, as decided by the health department, are met.

Thank you

Rita Walters, parent to two AACPS students in the Annapolis Cluster

32. Good morning,

I truly appreciate the level of thought and consideration that has been given to the various schooling options this year. My concerns with the current hybrid model are a) that the kids are not getting face-to-face instruction from their teachers when they will be in the classroom and b) the limited movement available to them during their lunch break. Many early childcare centers and private schools have their students and teachers wearing masks and have been able to safely engage in live instruction in the classroom. I strongly request the board consider adopting the hybrid plan so that families who choose to have their children attend school can effectively engage with their classmates and teacher. Additionally, early childcare centers have their children play on the playground with masks. To my knowledge there have not been significant outbreaks with these practices. I encourage the Board to expand the amount of playtime the students will get in the class and outside. With masks, I have no doubt elementary schools can engage in live instruction and play as safely and effectively as the early childcare centers and private schools around the state. With adjustments to the hybrid model that increase the amount of interaction and movement, we would be thrilled to have our child return to the in-person setting.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Rebecca Cisek

Ridgeway Elementary parent

Severn, MD

33. Dear Respected Board Members,

I am a parent of a High school and Middle school student, and I am writing to fight for my children. I would humbly ask the Board to approve a school reopening plan for ALL grade levels. Families in AA County deserve the right to CHOOSE between virtual and in-person hybrid learning, just like private schools in AA county and public schools throughout the country. It is time to decide and follow through so that we can get our students back to school. PLEASE use a common sense approach based on ALL public health guidelines, not just Covid numbers and staff vaccinations. The mental, physical, social and emotional health of our students is at stake.

Every day, I hear words like this from my teenagers, "what's the point?", "I can't do this for another week", "why does Aden (private school student) get to go to school?", "why can we go to the crowded grocery store but not play sports?" Our kids deserve better! A critical, formative year has been stolen from them, and they can never get it back. As their grades and mental health suffer, they continue to fall behind and miss out on information and opportunities that will affect their future college and career plans. Getting back to face to face instruction will help immensely. Let's reopen our schools! Our kids deserve better!

Thank you!

Amy Heinrichs

34. Dear Board Members,

This is a very hard email for me to type as I am more a person of action, rather than words. However, in these unprecedented times, I guess I shall do my best to express my thoughts.

Let me first start by saying that I don't envy your jobs or the decisions you've had to make over the past year. It truly is something you cannot prepare for or have had any experience in beforehand. Back in March of last year when schools closed, who knew we would be where we are today? Throughout this whole pandemic, I believe, you have made the choices that you thought were correct and in the best interest of the entire county. Now, you have that opportunity again. You have the chance to make the best choice and, I'm pretty sure, you know deep down what that is; reopening schools. Students will never forget the day their school doors closed and they were sent home to learn online. Now, give them a better memory. Give them one that will also stick in their minds forever; the day they went back into those closed doors and back into their schools!

Again, I'm not a man of many words so I will end it there. I believe I have stated my thoughts and I know being long-winded isn't fun either!

Thank you,

Emmett Overstreet

Parent of Violet (3rd grader) and Emmett (1st grader)

Crofton Woods Elementary

35. Hello,

I am a health care worker with 2 boys in aacps. 1 in middle and 1 in high school. I worry about the depression I am seeing from the social isolation. My son had a 15 yo friend tried to commit suicide! For the middle schoolers, they aren't developing enough with 40% curriculum. With working parents, there is no way to motivate the kids to motivate themselves. Severn, Spaulding and St Mary's have all been able to conduct some sort of in person school, as has St John's. The spike is not in the children. Many teachers are also low risk and young. I beg we return to some sort of in person schooling.

Thanks you for reading.

Shobha Whitacre, Severna Park

36. Madam or Sir,

Our family has three children in the Anne Arundel County Public Schools system. Two of our children have IEPs, one of whom is particularly struggling in remote learning. That child is in danger of falling extremely far behind peers and the shoulder-shrugging "well, all kids are in the same boat of falling behind" sentiment simply is not true. We were dismayed when our children's principal used that sentiment and tried to talk us out of hybrid learning during a Fall 2020 IEP meeting.

The simple reality is some children need more attention than others. For such children, every day in online learning is worse than in-person learning.

The same as we previously requested in November, we ask for an option for any parent/guardian who wants their child(ren) to have in-person learning, to be taught by any teacher who wants to teach in-person. This option particularly needs to be made available for children with IEPs or comparable plans.

Thank you for your time and effort to implement the option of in-person learning immediately for those parents/guardians, students and teachers who want that option.

Joshua Winger, Crofton

37. To Whom it May Concern,

I have two daughters enrolled in middle school in Anne Arundel County; one in seventh grade and one in eighth grade.

As the only parent in our household, I had to decide in September whether to quit my job or continue to work in order to support my family. Do I use the normal school day as daycare? No. My daughters are old enough to stay home alone and have done so for a couple of summers without issue. However, they are not old enough to motivate themselves to wake up, login, spend 8 hours on a computer, and then have the ability to complete countless hours of busy work that is assigned on a weekly basis. That is correct, busy work. The iReady assignment of 1.5 hours a week per student does not even correlate to what my students are learning in class. I know this because I spend my lunch break each day checking on my students and both have math during that time.

The distance learning set up is failing our students. One day my daughters will have Bs and no assignments due and two days later they will have Es and a dozen missing assignments. On a recent "team meeting" with all of my eighth grader's teachers, one of them didn't know her name and another mentioned that she only turns her camera on to show off her hamsters. We don't have any hamsters; only a dog. I receive countless emails weekly including one where a teacher informed me that my daughter had missed flex class on Tuesday...

Nicole Harris, Broadneck Cluster

38. AACPS,

We understand the difficult position you are in with making decisions regarding the health and wellbeing of both teachers and students. I have 4 children in the public school system. They all are without disability and don't have any learning issues. With that being said, they are all struggling in one way or another. I have a 1st grader, 4th grader, 7th grader and 11th grader so I see it at every level. These children need to be back in school as soon as possible. They are struggling mentally, emotionally and also academically. My 1st grader is bored out of his mind and completes his work within minutes and the rest of the class the teacher has to handle IT issues and other problems that arise. My 4th grader can't get in her Google Classroom half of the time. My 7th grader is beyond unmotivated and my 11th grader can't properly prepare for college while dealing with constant IT issues etc. Not to mention the lack of socialization. The teachers are doing a phenomenal job and I praise their efforts. There is only so much they can do from a computer screen. Please do what ever you can to get the children back in the classrooms.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Skylar Thompson

Annapolis, MD

39. Increased anxiety, depression, and phobia causing increased need for medication and counseling
Poor development of communication skills causing greater need for speech therapy
Muscle aches and pains caused by poor posture and prolonged positioning causing increased use of pain medication and physical therapy
Difficulty learning causing need to hire tutors
Inactivity causing obesity and other health problems
Family strife
Social isolation
Visual problems

These issues far outweigh the chance of covid-19 infection at school! Many articles are available to support this statement. Thanks for taking this information into account.

Stephanie Suesse

Parent of a high school student

Chesapeake Cluster

40. Good afternoon -

I am writing to request that the Board insist on language in any motion to reopen that links the timing of reopening directly to Health Department guidance and not to the discretion of Board members.

I have been deeply concerned by the politicization of this issue, and strongly request that you respect and adhere to the guidance of public health experts.

Thank you,

Erin Anderson (AACPS parent)

Pasadena

41. Dear Board of Education Members,

I ask that you listen and follow the professional advice of Dr. Kalyanaraman and revisit the reopening of schools when the county health metrics warrant it is safe to do so. You have a responsibility not only to AACPS, but to the community as a whole to not contribute to community spread by opening now when the health metrics are continuing to increase at alarming rates on a daily basis.

As a parent of an elementary school student and a middle school student I want my children back in in-person learning as much as everyone else, however, reopening right now is unfathomable. Once 1) a clearly defined reopening plan is created and made available, 2) the health metrics are at levels deemed safe to reopen by the county health department, and 3) teachers/school staff are fully vaccinated THEN a reopening of schools safely discussion should happen by prioritizing those students identified who would benefit most from in-person learning. Thankfully my children are thriving in the virtual learning environment. Those with the NEED to return to in-person learning should be given the choice to do so WHEN the above mentioned criteria is met.

Parents should be given a choice to send their children back into a school building when they feel comfortable doing so. Please keep a virtual learning option available for those families that want it even after it is deemed safe to reopen schools by the county health department.

Sincerely,

Lauren Werley-Wolf
Crofton

42. Hello Board of Anne Arundel County Public Schools;

My name is Erin Sowa and my children, Aislyn Sowa (2nd grade) and Kieran Sowa (1st grade) attend Folger McKinsey Elementary School in Severna Park, Maryland.

I firmly believe these kids need to be back in school or least a choice for them to go back hybrid. In doing so, the kids can socialize (or at least see other kids), see their teachers and be able to learn better in the traditional sense. My daughter is doing okay, yet my son, he is struggling and severely behind. He missed a lot by being in person the second part of Kindergarten and all of First Grade, where learning how to read, write (how can a teacher show him how to hold a pencil when virtual?), etc.. Is missed behind a screen (so much screen time!!). We have supplemented with paying tutors a few times a week, etc... Many families have two parents that work full time (like ours) and either are paying (we send kids to AACPS SACC) for eLearning/child care help or are struggling to balance work/life/kids. While I'm not in financial trouble (yet paying for childcare unexpectedly wasn't in the budget), I am in trouble of my son falling farther and farther behind in school and breaking his spirit for learning in the future.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Erin Sowa

Folger McKinsey

43. To the school board, I am writing to express my concern about the negative effects Virtual learning is having in high school students in Anne Arundel county. With class time being limited and material being condensed in the current model, students are not being adequately prepared to go to college after high school. If a student is not taught adequately all of the concepts in algebra 2 or geometry, they will have to decide whether to take more advanced math like pre-calculus the next year or repeat the class they just took. My 11th grader would like to take Pre-calculus and physics but I am not sure she will have the skills needed if we continue with virtual learning. She was an A student last year and is making Cs now because 90 minutes of class time for honors/AP classes is not enough. The emotional toll on students is too great to keep students at home any longer. I am hopeful that teachers can be vaccinated at the end of January and the schools can open in February. I am a healthcare worker who has not yet been vaccinated but go to work everyday because my patients need me. It is time for teachers to return to work in person because their students need them. Monica Fish, Crofton

44. Good afternoon -

I am a father of a high school freshman, middle school 8th grader and an elementary 5th grader. I am in favor of opening on a Hybrid schedule immediately. There is a safe way to do it and you have had almost 10 months to figure it out. Now is the time to re-open!

The psychological and mental toll that virtual school is causing may never be repairable. The isolation, depression and loss of interpersonal skills are frankly more important to me than risking catching the virus, which we all know now only affects children at very low numbers.

Please do the right thing and get them back to school...and give a virtual only option for those who are not comfortable attending in person.

Thank you.

Mike Murray, Realtor

Severna Park

45. I am writing as a concerned Crofton parent in regards to the plans to re-open schools.

We must keep schools closed until the metrics prove it is safe to reopen.

Our current case rate is as high as ever and climbing. It is nowhere near the recommended 10-15 /100k. It is not fair to our teacher or anyone in our community to send children back to school at this time. The risk is too great, especially with the new, more contagious strain of the virus that is shown to impact kids more aggressively.

Please do the right thing!

Keep school virtual until health metrics permit.

Once school staff is vaccinated, metrics to determine re opening can be re-evaluated.

Provide a virtual option until all students have the opportunity to vaccinated

Bring back small groups of children who are most in NEED first.

Provide parents with the metrics that will be used to determine when schools will be open, as well as a detailed description of what school will be like BEFORE asking us to commit to hybrid or virtual learning.

I sincerely thank you for all the hard work and effort being put in to creating a plan to open schools when it is safe. Please do the right thing.

Christina Hamorsky
Crofton, Maryland

46. Dear Board of Education Members:

I implore you to vote to postpone the implementation of Hybrid Learning. Bringing staff and students back into the school buildings before our county's COVID case rate meets the established metric and school employees have had the opportunity to receive the vaccine is reckless. Dr. Kalyanaraman's presentation during the last Board Meeting clearly stated that the Department of Health is recommending to not proceed with Hybrid learning at this time.

I know you are receiving countless pleas from both sides of this issue and trying to decide what is best for students, but if the Board chooses to continue with the plan to reopen school buildings for Hybrid learning now, against the recommendation of the Superintendent, against the recommendation of the Department of Health, and against the will of school employee groups, then the public will blame the Board for any COVID-19 fatalities among students and employees that occur.

Virtual Learning is not the preferred model for all students; however, the goal has always been to reopen school buildings *when it is safe to do so*, and the current case rates indicate that it is not safe yet. As Dr. Kalyanaraman pointed out during his presentation, implementing Hybrid learning during the peak of this global pandemic will undoubtedly add to the spread of COVID-19 and lead to overwhelming our hospitals. Implementing Hybrid Learning as planned would be an irresponsible action that will be detrimental to our county.

Thank you,

Michelle Choulis, Arnold

AACPS Parent & Employee

47. Good evening,

Most of the country and most of the world have opened their schools. Science supports in person instruction, especially for elementary. It looks like MD is one of only six states without in-person instruction. Our children are falling behind academically. This is terrible for their mental health. This is terrible for the economy and creates major hardship for working parents. I know that the BOE must know these facts.

I implore the BOE to find some courage, follow the science, and finally do the right thing. You have the power and you can lead the way in this state with your courage and commitment to our student's futures. Many are counting on you to do the right thing.

Good luck and thank you,

Ty Scott

Windsor Farm Elementary

48. BOE,

I am writing with my strongest endorsement for the reopening of schools as soon as possible. The date has continually moved, based on political pressure and random health metrics created by our county health officer who does not consider anything other than COVID rates when addressing the health of our children (i.e. depression, suicide, decreased learning).

It is time that the BOE stand up to TAAAC and their unreasonable demands. TAAAC is now demanding that teachers receive two doses of the vaccine AND reach the arbitrary metric of 15/100k set by our health officer. **Just so it is understood, they want to be vaccinated and have immunity, yet still want case rates to drop too.**

I have personally supervised employees and have seen the stress caused by teachers not being in the classroom for this long. Parents are constantly balancing their jobs and virtual learning. Why are teachers exempt when they are literally holding EVERY OTHER working adult with kids hostage?

I understand that returning to in-person learning is not for everyone, but I do not understand why the BOE is taking this CHOICE from those who need to attend, especially when studies show that spread is controlled when wearing masks, limiting group sizes, and hand washing is enforced.

Anne Arundel County Schools are on the verge of losing the confidence of their parents with the constant kicking of the can. It is time to put our kids first and give parents the CHOICE that all of us deserve!

Thank you,
Matt Fine
Crofton

49. I am writing to express my support for the immediate reopening of our schools! I encourage this for all students who are able to attend.

The Survey results that are on page 1 of your workbook have been ignored!

Therefore, as a Parent, and taxpayer, I am beyond frustrated by the behavior of the Professionals and Educators in the AACPS System.

There have been 10 months of time for those responsible to create a safe, in person learning environment at each of our children's schools.

A further delay is unnecessary and would cause further harm to our students.

A recap of the votes in the survey:

45% return to in person.

32% hybrid.

79% of Parents felt these two options were safe.

21% virtual.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns.

I just hope they are heard and executed by our AACPS professionals and not ignored.

The Parents of AA County live here to send our children to public schools. We are very frustrated and feel our voice has been ignored.

Please don't disappoint the community that makes all this possible.

Sincerely,

Ed & Marcella DeSantis
Severn Acres

50. I'm a parent of two children currently attending Davidsonville Elementary School. We're lucky that our kids are good kids - good students - don't have any medical issues or learning disabilities. I completely understand that we're lucky, and I'm grateful every single day. While they might be doing "okay" most days, this is not acceptable. We NEED to have the choice to be in-person in the classroom because I want my kids to have the superior education they are entitled to - the one they were receiving prior to this virus.

As much as we love our teachers, our 1st grader and 3rd grader are falling behind through no fault of their own. We owe this to our kids. I expect more from our school district. There needs to be a clear timeline and a clear decision of the path forward. This decision needs to be based on a common sense approach and not tied to Dr. K's metrics. If we have to wait for numbers to be under the threshold he's set forth, our kids will be out of school indefinitely. We cannot wait for all teachers and staff to be fully vaccinated as we know some will refuse to get the shots. We need to offer those who want to go back (both parents AND teachers) the CHOICE to go back in person now before we waste more time.

The hybrid model was already approved back in November 2020. It's time to implement it.

Sincerely,
Katie Grey

51. I beg of you to follow the directive of Dr. K. It will be massively hypocritical to follow his guidelines one moment and actively oppose them the next. Loss of education is not as detrimental or permanent as the loss of lives. The fact that at the highest point of infection during our pandemic even one individual on that board would consider our return is not just mind boggling but murderous.

Loss of life or permanent damage caused by COVID will be on the board should they choose to send even one adult or child back. You will be sending us to the slaughter. No one on that board has the medical background to stand in opposition. The fact that anyone would is as repulsive as it is reckless.

Allow educators that elect the opportunity to complete the vaccination cycle and then revisit this when Dr. K states it is safe to do so. This is not a board of doctors, no one should act as if it is.

Myself and my family have remained in tact and safe from COVID by placing massive restrictions and following the information provided by Dr. K and other health professionals. Don't risk our lives now, with safety and a light so near the end of this tunnel.

Laura Shea Hans, Severna Park

52. My name is Megan Kinsey and I am a mom of 2 girls, stepmom to a HS boy. I work full-time, currently at home and have kids in all 3 levels of school. One at DES, one at Central Middle and one at Crofton High. All three are struggling with virtual school.

My youngest has ADHD and 504 plan. Her ability to truly participate and learn has been greatly diminished. On a weekly basis, we have temper tantrums regarding school issues.

My middle child is currently battling anxiety and depression - which has only gotten worse with this. Loss of interaction with others and proper school is a HUGE part. She barely engages in her classes and has lost her love of school/learning- and her grades which used to be all As are now Cs, Ds, and Es. Our High schooler is also struggling with maintaining his grades and his mental health. Both are on medication now.

I work full time and I have become a full-time teacher/aide. I can't imagine what those families do that work full time but are out of the house.

Our kids are suffering. They have no drive, no motivation and are NOT learning. We need the option to get them back in the classroom. I know the virtual environment works for some, but it does not work for us. The metrics do not support continued 100% virtual and families should be given choice.

250 words is quite limiting and this is barely scratching the surface of what I could share. Parents need to be given the choice...

53. Dr. Arlotto and AACO Board of Education,

Thank you for listening to the words and thoughts of a High School Library Media Assistant of 25 years at Broadneck High School.

Nothing about this pandemic is perfect. Nothing is easy for students and/or staff. There is no right answer for every person this affects, but there is a RIGHT ANSWER...A "SAFE ANSWER" for all.

With the numbers extremely high in AACO and vaccines have yet to reach any of the staff or students of our schools, sending students and staff back in the classroom at any capacity, is a DANGEROUS and potentially DEADLY DECISION.

We have "weathered" the storm thus far. The Health Department has advised to wait. Dr. Arlotto has advised to wait. And now I ask you to please, wait just a little longer to restart AACO schools UNTIL TEACHERS AND STAFF ARE VACINATED. We pride ourselves on safety of students and staff our #1 priority. If this is true, then why should it be any different now, as we face the highest number of COVID cases and rising?

Wouldn't it be better to start when everyone has been vaccinated then to return to school now and mourn those who we lost in vain?

Thank you for your time... your decisions affect our lives.

Laurie A. Lester

Broadneck High School

54. Superintendent Arlotto, Board Members:

My son Daniel is a third grader at Benfield Elementary in Severna Park, MD. Before the pandemic started, Daniel was an eager student who loved school so much he would ask during the summer when it would start up again. He was known by all of his teachers and recognized by his school at the time (Tulip Grove Elementary in Bowie, MD) with an award for his helpful and cheerful attitude.

When virtual learning started, Daniel's attitude changed. Without the in-person feedback of his teachers and his peers, he became anxious, reluctant, and oppositional. Attending virtual classes left him worn out mentally and emotionally and reminded him of all he could not do. Most importantly, it took real-time feedback away from him and made it much harder for him to grasp concepts. I watched his engagement and his progress drain away day by day.

Now, almost a year into virtual learning, Daniel is telling us that all of these things "make me feel like I'm dead." His pediatrician has been concerned enough to refer him for counseling. No matter how good the school is – and Benfield Elementary is a good school – virtual learning cannot substitute for in-person teaching. I urge the board to move to hybrid learning at the start of the second semester.

Rebecca St. Andrie

Severna Park, MD

55. Dear Board Members,

I would like to urge you to consider the unseen mental health issues children are dealing with when making your decision about when to reopen schools.

My son is in 1st grade and started weekly professional therapy in June. The lockdown and isolation in the spring exacerbated his anxiety and OCD to the point where he was too afraid to go outside. We are lucky to have been able to afford to pay out of pocket for therapy since it is not covered by our insurance. Not every family has this ability, especially now.

He also has separation anxiety; something we struggled with during his Kindergarten year despite having the kindest and most loving teacher. My 6-year-old has stated multiple times that he never wants to go back into a school building. He has now experienced more of his schooling at home than he has in a classroom. The longer he is home, the more difficult it is going to be to get him back to school and the more therapy he is going to need to help him do so.

He is the perfect student- pays attention, participates, gets his work done. He exhibits no signs that he is struggling. Neither his teachers nor any other school staff members have had a clue what he has been dealing with. How many more children out of the 83,000 are like my son?

Please consider mental health and let these kids return to school as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Laura Romanczyk

Parent of a 1st and a 4th grader at Crofton Woods

56. AACPS Board,

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and really listen to ALL families, not just those of organizations and affiliations. Please listen to real families and students at AACPS not parent Facebook groups that are constantly sending out messages on exactly what to write and shaming families that have different opinions than they represent.

My daughter is a 5th grade student with AACPS and is doing average with virtual learning. She has a disconnect with her teachers and peers. She is active and engaged everyday but is retaining very little. Her grades are significantly reduced in comparison to prior years. She looks forward to 11:15 and 3:15 everyday when she can close the Chromebook and be done with school. She dreads logging in each day and is no longer excited about education. We feel she needs to be back in a classroom but we know there are others that have a much greater need. She lacks confidence to put forth her best work. She is depressed about moving onto Middle School and the challenges that faces plus the possibility of never returning to her Elementary School as a student.

My proposal is short and to the point.

Dr. K says vaccines will be available to all AACPS staff by late January/ early February. We need to keep him at his word, we need to hold the County Executive and the County Health Officer accountable. Other counties across Maryland have already begun vaccinating educators. Why is Anne Arundel County behind? Why aren't they doing more to ensure a more efficient process for vaccines?...

Thank you,

Julia Howes

Shady Side

57. My name is Erika and mother of 5 AACPS students. They range from K-11 grade. Families need a CHOICE to come back or not. It is almost a year since school was let out and there has yet to be a plan developed. I don't care much for excuses or talk. It's time to walk the talk. It is disgusting how flippy floppy these meetings have been. A survey was sent to give families options and we were not heard.

I work 80% less hours because we must involve during school hours. I spend more money because they need further support like medication, therapy, tutoring, training. I had hoped the BOE and the superintendent to make up y'all mind at this point. I was going to pull my kids in September 2020, but I had hope. Now, I see the TAAAC has made more demands such as meeting the metrics and mandatory vaccines to return to school. Enough is enough. It's like Mr. Smith said before, are you guys waiting for a student to commit suicide to wake up the BOE? My daughter was literally about to give up on life. I need you to let that sink in. What if that was your daughter or son having suicidal thoughts? All because school extracurricular was taken away, not interacting with their friends/teachers, or cannot grasp a concept in school. The most affected by school closures are minority, low income, and single parent family homes. Make moves and stop with all these delays.

Erika Pabon, Edgewater

58. Dr Arlotto-

I appreciate the long hours you are investing in getting our kids back into school. I watched the board meeting last week and as you prepare for another one this week- specific to reopening- I wanted to share our family's thoughts. We are parents of a middle school stem student at OMMS and of a 4th grader at SSES.

We want our kids back in school- when it can be done safely. We also understand that our kids are hanging in there and many are not and it would be a priority to get them back to school sooner rather than later. With this in mind I am also very concerned with our record numbers of Covid cases- today we hit over 60 as our case rate. I have been carefully watching the UK shut schools back down as their rates accelerate and the new strain of the virus spreads- despite their being ahead of the US in vaccine roll out. I also am watching with sadness the hospital crisis happening in southern California (where the weather is nice and they are outside way more than us!) and don't want to see us go down the path where ambulances can't even unload at our local emergency rooms.

It is imperative that before we bring the regular student back in hybrid mode we have lower spread and a lower load on hospitals.

That said I would support a tiered re-opening which would allow for those who are not thriving to return sooner-once our staff has been able to receive both doses of the vaccine...

Anne Canaday, Crownsville

59. **Dawn Hudson**

Broadneck Peninsula school cluster

I'm writing to address the return to in person learning, you as the board have an obligation to provide parents a choice to return to in person learning. This includes ALL grades levels! We need to use a common sense approach to public health measures such as hand washing and mask wearing as well as looking at the mental, social and emotional well being of our children.

COVID should be taken seriously and as a nurse I understand the concerns around the virus however the children are not walking into a COVID unit at the hospital they are going into a school building. These concerns were addressed and solutions presented in November of 2020. All other businesses have adjusted to living within a COVID world right now except schools. My middle schoolers is bored out of his mind and there has been NO plans addressed for middle and high schools. It is unrealistic to think all teachers will be vaccinated in the next month nor should we have to satisfy that metric to reopen schools. I demand to see a plan ASAP for all grade levels , stop moving the timeline! Everyday my child ask why some of their friends are in school (private) thriving and are safe in their learning environments. I have no answer for them when they beg to go back because they " miss their friends, teachers, and can focus better at school." Choice cannot be one sided..... I understand some want to stay virtual but there are an overwhelming amount of parents who want a return to school plan for this year..

Thank you,

Dawn Hudson

60. AACPS BOE,

It is time to give parents and students a choice to return to in-person education. Students, parents, and teachers deserve a solid date for returning vice an ever shifting goal line. This date should not be based on every single teacher having a vaccine as I do not believe it should be mandated to return to teach. There are countless schools around the country and even in our county that have figured out how to stay in person. The continued lockdown of our children will cause AACPS to fall from one of the best school systems in the state to the worst.

As our Board of Education, who are you meant to serve? I say STUDENTS!

Ruth Roberson
Severna Park

61. Dear Board Members and Dr. Arlotto,

I am writing as a parent and teacher in the AACPS school system. I am writing to you to implore you to please consider the health metrics and advice given by Dr. Kalyanaraman when making your decision to reopen schools.

As a parent, I am hoping we will receive more information regarding the classroom model for high school and middle school hybrid plan before we are required to make a choice for our children. I will most likely make the decision to keep my children virtual for the remainder of the year. They are in 7th and 9th grade and I have asked their opinion in this decision. Both feel if they are just going to be in the school building but doing the same work on their devices as they would at home, they would rather be at home. We are quite privileged to have good devices, good internet connection and 2 parents working from home to assist when needed. My children are doing fine academically at home, but they miss their peers and connections with teachers, however, we are not willing to risk our health for that until the community spread of virus is more controlled.

As a teacher, I implore you to consider the health metrics, the rate of community spread of virus and roll-out of the vaccine for teachers when considering opening. I miss my students and would love to see them in person again and am very willing and excited to do this when I am fully vaccinated...

Sincerely,

Joanne Guy, Southern Cluster

62. Dear AACPS BoE,

This is a formal plea to have students be given the choice to return to school ASAP from Melissa Marshall, 3 children at Crofton Elementary School.

It is absolutely imperative that students be given the choice for in person learning, for not only their mental, and physical state, but what is lost and what may be more important their emotional

health. Teachers are doing their best but children are not at all engaged in virtual learning, they are not retaining the information they are receiving, and are unable to handle this environment. Please change the metrics so children have the option to return to school. It is vital for their health and well being.

As parents we understand the seriousness of this pandemic but feel with school staff's help and proper PPE for students/teachers we can successfully return to school.

Thank you for your time and consideration with this matter.

Sincerely,
Melissa Marshall

Crofton Elementary Parent

63. My name is Lindsey Martin. My husband, Scott, and I have 2 high schoolers in the South River cluster. We support the CHOICE to return to an in-person learning model for our AACPS students. We are beyond frustrated by our district's decision to stay closed to all students this year! Our children, Justin Martin a Junior and Emerson Martin a Freshman at South River High School, are desperate to return to school on February 1st. It is so ridiculous that our freshman has not stepped foot into her high school and it is now January!

We are begging you...for the health and well- being of all AACPS students...no more public hearings! Please decide which metrics to use and vote so we can get our kids back to school ASAP. Please create a timeline immediately for students to Return to In-Person Learning so they have something to look forward. Also, please send out the surveys to determine who wants to return so you can prepare accordingly.

We cannot wait until all persons entering the school buildings are vaccinated- this is unrealistic and simply not necessary. General safety precautions are sufficient in our opinion!!!

The pandemic has affected our family too. Our daughter contracted the virus in late Nov. and made a full recovery. My husband is a Lt. with DC Fire and EMS and has been working on the frontlines since February. I work at the VA in R&D and have been reviewing COVID related study's for our Veterans. We are not dismissing the threat of the virus – we acknowledge the seriousness, but we cannot continue to live in fear and deny our children a quality education during their most important years!...

Sincerely,
Lindsey and Scott Martin

64. Please give a CHOICE for students to go back to in-person. The high schoolers are suffering, mostly in silence. They need to be back just as much if not more than the younger children. This is affecting their mental health as well as impacting what they will have for college applications. If you are going to use metrics, then add the metrics of depression, academic apathy, anxiety, and reduced college/trade options. High schoolers NEED to be IN school. Please fight for our children to get back asap. There are safety precautions everyone (teachers, students, staff) can take that the health care workers and other professionals/public have been doing. They work. Please fight for our children and provide them a choice.

There were a total of 17 cases in the entire Broadneck districted feeder area over the last week. That is NOT a lot. 22 in Severna park. Again, not a lot. Crownsville, 5. Gambrills, 6. The likelihood that these are even people that would be part of the school system or even choose the in-person option is very very small. Other areas have zero. It is the school system's job to educate our children in a way that they can learn. Please please, fight for our children and give them a choice.

Thank you,

Lori Smith, Severn Park Cluster

65. Hello,

Thank you for your continued effort to manage these unprecedented times. Despite your obvious efforts, please understand that the constant meetings and surveys and change of plans is adding unnecessary and damaging stress to children and their parents.

At the BoE meeting on January 14, please confirm that the health metrics presented by Dr. K. in November and December are still in force. Specifically, confirm that schools will begin to reopen when the test positivity rate is below 5% and the case rate is <15/100,000 people, but not before that. While vaccines for teachers will help bring those numbers under control, they are not a substitute for lowered community spread.

Please immediately develop a plan so that once community spread is lower, we all understand exactly what will happen so that students can quickly return to school in an organized and smooth manner.

Confirm the clear metrics, publicize a plan, and stick with it.

Thank you,

Morgan Van Arsdall

Mother of a 3rd grader at Cape St Claire Elementary School

66. Members of the BOE,

I am writing to voice my opinion that you should follow the County Health Officer's proposed metrics for reopening schools when deciding when to initiate the hybrid learning option for AACPS. I do not believe schools should open in the near future given the current Covid numbers, and while I understand that my husband and I could choose to keep our children at home learning virtually, it is our hope that at some point this spring the numbers will improve to a point where they can safely return to school. It's my understanding that the choice we would have to make to send them back should schools reopen soon cannot be changed for the remainder of the year; I don't want to have to make a decision that will impact the rest of the school year right now when the Anne Arundel County Covid case rate is at an all-time high.

We personally know people in another state who were infected with Covid in public school hybrid learning environments, so I am unable to accept the argument that Covid is not spread in schools. I believe the recent data that Dr. Kalyanaraman presented showing that Covid spreads in schools at a rate similar to the rate of spread in the broader community is likely accurate; as mentioned above, currently the rate in Anne Arundel County is high. I also fear that reopening schools given current numbers could

send MD down a path similar to that of Southern CA, and while I don't leave my home very frequently these days, I do appreciate that we in MD are not totally "locked down."...

Sincerely,

Amy Swenson

Edgewater, MD

67. I have been asked to contribute my experience with virtual learning to add to your info for decision making.

My 10th grader at SPHS has been a straight A student up until the time virtual school started last year.

Today she had a panic attack in Algebra2.

She has been struggling with this class and chemistry since school started in the fall.

When she told us initially (2nd week of school) that she had a bad teacher and two 45 minute classes were "not cutting it" we got her a tutor right away (at \$75 per hour)

Since then she has periodically broken down in tears over and over ---and this week TWICE, last night for over an hour and today she had a panic attack during class.

I am told that she has one of the "known bad teachers" Bernadette kraft --

I emailed her counselor today to see if we can get her a different teacher for next semester.

I URGE you to get these kids back in school in person for their mental health. ***Teenagers were not meant to be learning alone in their rooms for hours and hours each day, only to finish and then have more homework again, alone in their rooms.***

One of Caeley's friends also tried to commit suicide in November, this is very distressing and upsetting to watch happen to these girls.

I am working hard to help Caeley through this and hope that you can figure a way to get these kids to go back THIS YEAR!!!!!!!...

Mimi Shea

parent of Caeley Shea, Sophomore at SPHS

68. Hello, I am a parent of two AACPS students as well as a county teacher for going on 19 years. I am from Edgewater. I first want to assure you that my letter and concerns are NOT just a part of an "action" but are valid and VERY real concerns I have for my own safety, as well as the safety of my own children and my school children. I am shocked that I even must write this letter. Back in the fall, we relied on a MEDICAL doctor and his metrics to guide our decision. Why, when the numbers are now at 60 per 100,000 are we even having the discussion to reopen? Dr. K keeps repeating himself over and over again that doing this with these numbers will lead to grave outcomes. Let me ask you, what is more important, someone's life, be it a teacher or a student, or some parents being angry that their children cannot go into a school building? You asked for research to back up Dr. K's analysis, I hope you read it. I hope that you understand that you are literally dealing with life and death. I implore you to wait until all teachers

and staff have received a vaccine. Do not give into bullies, go with FACTS and LISTEN to the medical doctor that is trying to tell you the safest way to proceed. To the board members who appear to be listening to Dr. K sincerely, I thank you. Keep up the fight...

Laura Jorgensen

7th grade Science

69. To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Stacey Henley-Brown. My 3rd grader, Gabriel Brown attends Marley Elementary School in Glen Burnie. I reside in the Creekside Village Community neighborhood. I am requesting a return to learn in the classroom. My son has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and needs in person learning. He is in a general education class and is supposed to have an adult support. But with virtual learning that is not realistic. He has gained great computer skills however he is otherwise lacking and needs hands on/visual learning. Myself and his stepfather try to help him the best that we can but because we are not educators our assistance is not 100% efficient. The pace of virtual instruction is too fast for him to keep up so I have to type his answers and work into the computer for him and go back over instruction again after hours. Due to my son having ASD, he does private ABA therapy three times a week in the evenings. Virtual school and ABA therapy has taken a toll on his mental stability. Every single day he cries and ask when is COVID-19 going to be over because he wants to go back to school, learn like he used to, and make friends.

We should not wait until a vaccine is implemented for a return to learn in person. We should use case metrics and common sense safety. Please vote now so our children can get back to the classroom. Waiting for all staff to be vaccinated in unacceptable...

Virtually Yours,

Stacey Henley-Brown

70. I believe that we should return to school in person. Online school has negatively affected so many kids throughout this year, including myself. My motivation to do work and get up in the morning to log into online classes is slowly going down. I am physically and mentally EXHAUSTED. My social skills have taken a hard hit and I am just so frustrated. This is not fun and it doesn't feel like real school. I don't feel like I'm learning as much as I should, if at all. Personally, I don't feel like the opinions of the students are being cared about. Many, MANY of us want to go back and we are TIRED and STRUGGLING. This is not a good experience for everyone but it is hitting us high schoolers harder than most. You should be spending time to figure a plan to get us back, not only focusing on elementary school students and then ignoring us completely. It is very sad and lonely doing online work, I miss my friends, I want to meet my teachers in person, I want to do the clubs and extracurricular activities I love IN PERSON. I even miss lunch assignments. I miss the excitement of not knowing who's in your lunch but when you get there it is all ok because you find your friends, meet new people, and reconnect with others you haven't seen in awhile. Another big issue is that I am starting to fall out of love with my favorite activities...

Gianna Dicks, 10th grade, Severna Park High School

71. Good afternoon

I am writing in a last desperate plea to reopen schools at minimum in a hybrid format beginning second semester for ALL grades.

While sitting watching Sunday football with my 8th grade son looks at me out of the blue and says "mom, you know I have learned nothing since we left school?" 10 months later this is where we are. We all understand the metrics, the health department recommendations, teachers "afraid" of being in the building, I get it. But we don't understand yet is what the long term effect this will have on our children, my children, (10th and 8th grade.) Their educational gap and mental stability.

We have done our part for 10 months. Wearing masks, washing hands and socially distancing as best as we can where allowed. Nothing else any of us can do.

Front line workers, grocery store workers, restaurant staff, etc. have never had a choice to go in. It is their job and if they want to earn their income, then they show up. Teachers should not have a choice its their job. Or leave.

We have states that have remained opened since this pandemic began and there is no reason what so ever we cannot follow suit. Make the right decision this time and open schools to those who choose to come back.

The life has been sucked out of my children as well as my husband and I.

Thank you.

Jill Sohan

Central Middle and SRHS

72. Hello,

My kids attend Monarch Academy GB and GBHS. I do not agree with reopening schools. I don't think the county can properly clean and sanitize the schools and buses. This is jeopardizing the health of teachers, kids and other school employees. I think it is better to wait until the numbers are down.

Kristin Karopchinsky
Glen Burnie

73. I am the parent of two high school seniors at Broadneck High School. I do NOT support the reopening of our county schools at this time. I do NOT support revising the required health metrics for reopening that were voted upon last fall. The decision to reopen schools is a decision that should be done with the utmost care and follow the health metrics and recommendations of the Anne Arundel County Health Officer. I believe the original parameters established in October are appropriate until

such time that a sufficient number of staff have been fully vaccinated with two doses that afford the best protection against COVID.

In addition, I do NOT support the changes made to the high school schedule. My high school seniors DO NOT support the changes. They were thriving under the prior virtual learning schedule with the later start times, less time wasted in class, and more independent learning opportunities. They are no longer able to efficiently use their time for independent learning and homework completion, make much-needed social and learning connections with friends, participate in a midday study group, and pursue their additional outside interests. Please consider a return to the prior schedule. The new one won't help struggling learners, and it penalizes those who were doing well.

Thank you for your time and careful consideration of these important issues.

Aimée B. Pharr

74. Gov. Hogan announced today that several Maryland Covid stats reached record highs today. As of 1/10/2021 our case rate was 54.3 which is astronomically higher than the recommended reopening rate presented in the Fall. We need to wait until the infection rate drops below 15 per 100K before we AGAIN adjust student and family schedules, so we don't have to readjust them again! I, as a teacher, would like to receive both vaccinations before returning to the building. You are not health experts and you are in no position to supersede the recommendations of those who are. Please follow the science, respect we educators' health, and slow the rush into the buildings until the written safety guide is complete, signed and the infection rate falls below 15 per 100K. Thank you.

[Judi Hudson](#)

[Second Grade Teacher](#)

[Odenton Elementary School](#)

75. My name is Wayne Schepens, we live in the Linstead Community and I have a daughter that attends Severna Park High School. It is the obligation of this board to ensure my daughter has the right to choose to attend in-person classes in high school in accordance the previously approved plan. She has been home like the rest and it has taken a significant toll on her emotionally, physically and academically. I understand there are others that oppose, but they all have the ability to stay home should they desire. For my daughter, the in-person interaction is a necessity, not a nice-to-have. She currently has retreated to her room, has become less motivated, and less social. This is a direct result of the situation. For a girl who plays field hockey and won a state championship as a freshman on varsity last year, this is devastating. You must protect the innocent that have had the school experience taken away from them for no fault of their own. It has been proven that there is no great risk for students to attend in-person and it is happening successfully all across the country. It is also important not to use ineffective metrics such as % positivity but rather look at the data that shows the extremely low rates of serious cases in children of school age. We demand to see a reasonable opening plan that goes into effect immediately.

76. Amy Willey

Chesapeake Schools

As a mom to a kindergartener sitting through virtual learning, I am outraged at the level of unpractical, unprofessional, and unreasonable behavior going on. My child is not being challenged mentally or physically by staying home. He deserves better! Please explain to me how many children across the country can attend in person school FULL TIME but here in Maryland, we are still trapping our children at home. As adults and parents it is our job to set a good example for our kids and by using them as pawns in a political mess is a disgrace. We live in America and have the freedom of choice which has been stripped from our grasp. Give parents the choice to send their children to school. Give children the opportunity to learn and grow. Our children need to return to full time school without a change in schedule and without a computer. I demand that you reevaluate your plans to return with our children in mind. We can do better. We will do better. Open our schools.

77. My name is Jessica Ringle and my husband and I have 2 children at Broadneck Elementary. It is time for staff and students to return to in-person instruction. We understand that there is a lot that goes in to this decision- but many school systems have been able to return successfully at this point with minimal COVID outbreaks and we are BEGGING for Anne Arundel County to give our kids the same opportunity.

We understand that we all have some risk to bear and this will take effort of everyone's part, including parents, teachers, parents, children, grandparents and child care providers to name a few. However, the majority of the workforce has returned to work sharing these same risks and feel that it is time for teachers to do the same! I am not minimizing the risk to teachers or students, but we are all aware at this point that there is much more at risk than just exposure to this one virus. We are fighting mental health, social regression, educational regression and the biggest unknown being the affects that virtual learning will truly have on our children's genuine understand and long-term retention.

I understand everyone's situation is different and not everyone is comfortable returning at this point, but us parents that feel that in person instruction is the best choice for our children should have the option to do so. Every other industry has opened in some form or fashion, and I hope that you all can agree that childhood education is at the top of the list of "essential" industries...

Sincerely,

Jessica Ringle

78. To Whom This May Concern,

I hope this email finds you all healthy and well.

I saw that we can send written comments to this email address. I will keep this short and simple. There are a lot of essential workers right now that need to go into work every day that are critical to the success of beating this virus and we can't be home teaching our children. Virtual learning is harming us the most. Instead of our children in school, they are now in daycare trying to learn which is NOT working! It is time that the teachers be essential and get back in their classroom and teach the children. This is doing so much harm to our children and we are already seeing the educational and EMOTIONAL stress on our children.

There are many states and private schools that are back to school with very little negative consequences. Why can't we do it in MD? We planned to go to private when this all came out but were hopeful that public schools were going back in November. Why did you go back on your word? I am sure the teachers are fighting back because of their safety. These are the same teachers we see at grocery stores, restaurants and bars etc. If they were concerned for their safety, they shouldn't leave the house. If they really actually cared for our children like they say they do, they wouldn't be so selfish and get back in the classroom.

Thanks,

Mike Moyer, Riva

79. Dear BOE members,

I am urging you to please commit to the support and advice of Dr. K and the Anne Arundel Health Department on which to base school reopening and timelines. I ask that you commit to Dr. K's proposal of first bringing in targeted small-groups of needs students with the review of the health department, only to open schools to the general large group population based on the support from the health department.

I have heard BOE members refer to "good conscience," but this is not about conscience...this is about humanity. It is inhumane to force teachers into buildings at the very apex of this pandemic, already knowing that AAC does not have the ability to offer healthcare or treatment to those who fall ill. Dr. K is not exaggerating, as we personally know children who have gone to AAMC for non-Covid treatment, only to be triaged in hallways and released with medicine while awaiting a space for surgery.

I have heard BOE members say that parents are being given an option, but these options are unethical. We are being forced to choose between two impossible and high risk choices. We are being offered to return our children to an environment that is wholly unsafe and against the dire warnings of local health experts, or to choose to prevent them from any in-person instruction for the rest of the school year even when in-person schooling will be significantly safer in a matter of weeks.

I've heard BOE members reference other districts and states about being open...

Shira Kaplan
Millersville, MD

80. Good Evening BOE members,

A.A. Co. has a multitude of reasons not to return to face/face school.

#1. Dr. K, our county medical expert, clearly told you, he is not ready to discuss reopening schools until March, after the vaccine has been given and after our hospitalizations have decreased.

#2. Respect the expert! Accept you are not the medical experts.

#3. The messy hybrid plan has not changed. It is still messy. It is not developmentally appropriate. It is not educationally sound. It is not best practices, nor does it utilize differentiated instructional strategies. Please do not ask teachers or students to participate in something so very wrong.

T-Model set up in **all classrooms**, grades ECI-12. Which age group is this an appropriate educational model? What is differentiated?

Everyone is 6 feet apart, learning independently with **our faces covered**. Which age group is this an appropriate educational model? What is differentiated?

Large gatherings will not be organized. **What does this mean?** Will large gatherings be disorganized? Which age group is this an appropriate educational model? What is differentiated?

Instructional materials will **not be shared**. Which age group is this an appropriate educational model? What is differentiated?

In person 2 consecutive days a week/virtual learning 3 days a week. **Disruption of current established schedules**. Which age group is this an appropriate educational model? What is differentiated?

#4. Respect the experts! Accept that you are not the educational experts. We (teachers) are the educational experts.

Sincerely, Linda Allen-Bell

Exceptional Needs Specialist

Nationally Board Certified

Community of Olde Mill

81. Dear Board Members,

I am the parent of Severna Park high school sophomore and senior. I also work part time as an AACPS library media assistant and tutor to Bates 6th grade students. I have grave concerns about the harm that virtual learning is doing to my own son's, as well as the students I teach: the countless hours in front of a screen, lack of exercise, minimal social interaction/group work, the loss of my son's senior year and more! But what has me more concerned than anything else is what I see and hear in the background as I am tutoring students. These kids don't have a desk or school area. They are in a common area with parents, siblings, dogs, loud TV's, guests coming and going and lots of yelling. It is heartbreaking. Additionally, I have three neighbors that work in Anne Arundel Medical Center ER. They told me that what is more concerning to them than the Covid patients is the pediatric ER full of kids with depression, anxiety and other mental health issues stemming from virtual learning.

The BOE needs to allow parents the choice to send students of ALL ages back into classrooms! Many private schools in our area have been open since the beginning of this year without issues! When will we ever be 100% safe from this? Never! We cannot keep our students out of school indefinitely. Please act now and bring students of all ages back into schools.

Thank you for your time,

Laurie Dennis

82. Dear members of the School Board:

We are the parents of three elementary school children attending Severna Park Elementary School. We implore you to provide parents with the **choice to return to in-person learning for all students**. We understand that COVID-19 has presented unprecedented challenges, however the Board of Education has the responsibility to lead and develop a common-sense timeline for reopening schools. The costs to students of continuing with virtual learning are too great.

Like many parents we both work full-time and struggle to support our three young learners. It is sad to watch them struggle alone in front of a computer. We are witnessing first-hand learning loss, missed assignments, a disengagement from school, an inability to attend to virtual instruction, and a decline in grades. We are also cognizant of even more damaging impacts of learning loss for children who are English-language learners, children with disabilities, children living in poverty, and children who are Black or Hispanic/Latino. Education disparities will only worsen the longer virtual learning continues. Metrics for reopening must be finalized tonight and based on *all* public health metrics and social/emotional well-being concerns, and not on staff vaccinations, which could take months. The American Academy of Pediatrics supports in-person learning and encourages schools to take a multi-pronged, layered approach to protect teachers and staff. See [services.aap.org](https://www.aap.org).

Families should be provided a choice to remain virtual or begin in-person schooling.

Sincerely,

Megan and Tim Berger

83. I would like to very respectfully ask you to consider putting a re-opening plan in place. A decision needs to be made. The Board of Education has the authority and responsibility to do so. Our children are literally running out of time, especially High Schoolers.

We, as parents know that you must take so many factors into consideration. We know that certain measures will need to be put in place in school buildings, and secondary students are very capable of following guidelines such as wearing masks, and social distancing. But you must also consider our children's mental, emotional, and social well-being.

Please put a plan of action in place. No more meetings, no more public hearing, no more surveys. Decide on a plan and vote so we can get our kids back in school. Please give us a realistic timeline for in person learning so that we can give our kids some kind of hope.

I know not every family wants to return to school, but we should all be at least given the option to choose.

Thank You for your time,

Stephanie Hagood , Glen Burnie

84. As a parent of children in Chesapeake Bay Middle and Chesapeake High School, in Pasadena, Maryland, I am urging you to please return our middle and high school children to in person learning now. Other counties in our state and schools across the nation, have their children back in school and ours are falling behind their peers in those areas, the same peers they will be competing against for spots in colleges and universities. While the virtual learning improved from the Spring, it is not an equal substitute to in-person learning. Our children need the in-person interaction and accountability that only in person learning will bring; accountability to other adults, to teachers, to coaches, to each other. E- learning is promoting isolation, is stifling creativity, and is breaking the spirit of these teens who have so much to offer. The lack of hands-on learning, experiments and in person debate is making learning boring and our children are losing interest in school and education. Public schools are supposed to bring an equal education for all that attend, that is not the case in E-Learning as the children aren't being granted the same access to the basic things needed, such as the internet, and a safe space to learn without distractions. In a day when equality and equity are at the forefront of so many people's mind, the education system is not providing this for our children. Children at all grade levels deserve the opportunity to return to in person learning now.

Sincerely,

Melissa Clark

85. Dear Dr. Arlotto and members of the Board of Education,

I love my job as a teacher. The absolute highlight of my day is seeing the faces of my students, whether virtual or in person. But I have never been more frightened in my life. And it is because of my job. Both Dr. Arlotto and Dr. Kalyanaraman have previously stated that even if opening at the recommended metrics, there will be Covid 19 cases in schools. They have said that there is no way to prevent 100% of the spread.

Now, when Covid case rates are higher than ever, is not the time to reopen our schools.

Dr. Kalyanaraman told the board that waiting to open schools will be *much safer for everyone once teachers are vaccinated*.

Elementary Teachers should be vaccinated sometime in February and secondary teachers sometime in March.

Do not put the lives of teachers at risk when we are so close to nearly guaranteeing their safety.

I am asking you to commit to the following:

- follow the recommendation of Dr. Kalyanaraman
- wait until the time when all teachers have the opportunity to be fully vaccinated
- listen to Dr. K and his advisors who can at that time reevaluate and develop a higher metric that would still allow for a safe reopening.

When we are so close to being able to ensure the safety of our teachers, it does not seem ethical to force their return when we are experiencing the highest case rates yet in this pandemic.

Sincerely,
Charlotte Murray
Teacher at Bodkin Elementary School
A resident of Odenton, MD

86. Dear Members of the Board of Education,

It has taken me a few days to get my thoughts in order and really try to capture concisely what I am thinking and feeling right now. I have not succeeded in being concise—brevity has never been my strong suit—but I hope you hear the heartfelt care and concern in my words.

As you know, early on I advocated loudly, often, and strongly for the school system to complete a needs assessment to identify student needs so AACPS could develop a plan to truly meet those needs. Sadly, you didn't do that. So, you have no sense of which kids are struggling the most or why. You don't know if it's because of a lack of in-person instruction, lack of social interaction with their peers, a toxic home environment, or simply the stress of living in a pandemic. Had you known the specific needs of individual students you would have been able to develop some outside the box strategies to meet those needs. You would have been able to build trust with struggling communities, and you would have been able to work towards closing gaps.

Sadly, none of that is possible with this "one size fits all" plan. I have accepted this. It is clear you have no intention of using a needs assessment and developing a new plan. And so, we are left with what we have.

If you open now, when nearly every single metric is the worst it has been since this pandemic started, you will shatter trust...

Sincerely,

~Kristen Caminiti
Gambrills, MD

87. Good Morning,

Ahead of tonight's meeting, I wanted to give my thoughts on re-opening. I hope the board will remember that numbers like 5, 10, and 15 cases per 100,000 people were key benchmarks for the re-opening decision in the fall. Maryland's current average cases per 100,000 is over 50. For the safety of Anne Arundel County's students, families, and teachers, I hope the Board will put forward a sensible timeline that does not start the process of going back to in-person learning until numbers have dropped significantly.

Best Wishes,
Christian Bonn
Teacher at Old Mill High School

88. Good Evening,

I am a parent of both an elementary student and a high school senior living in Anne Arundel Counties district 2. COVID has uprooted our lives in ways I never imagined but through it all I have and still believe we need to trust our health experts and their recommendations.

With the announcement of a special board meeting for January 14th regarding school reopening I am compelled to write in to adamantly encourage the board to follow the metrics and trust Dr. Kalyanaraman. I firmly believe he is committed to returning students, teachers and staff to classrooms when it is safe to do so.

Everyone's priority, especially the board of education, should be the ongoing efforts to decrease the community spread of COVID for the safe reopening of schools. The only way this happens is if we ALL listen and follow the recommendations of our health experts.

Thank you,

Amanda Cameron, Glen Burnie

89. Greetings Members of the Board of Education,

It is very unfortunate that Anne Arundel County has not done what it should to lower the infection rate enough to reopen schools for the second semester. I am not going to describe what could have been done to make it possible. It hasn't happened and our infection rates are now too high.

Where I teach, split between 3 elementary schools, these are the positive cases as of Jan. 11, 2021:

Pasadena (21122): 2,265 (3131)

Glen Burnie (21060): 1,537 (2121)

The numbers in parentheses are from the state and include congregate living facilities which the county does not.

Please allow time for faculty and staff to be fully vaccinated before returning to buildings. While we wait, do not increase screen time for elementary students who are already at their developmental limit.

The decision of when to open for in-person learning is not about what anyone wants to do. It is about what is safest for our entire community. Listen to our Health Officer. Follow the data for county infection rates. Though we have pandemic fatigue, we cannot act as if it is over. Protect our students, teachers, staff, and their families.

Sincerely, Lauren Elfring

90. Dear Dr. Arlotto and Members of the Board,

I know that you have a monumental task ahead of you. The reopening of school buildings and returning students to the classroom is something that should be monumental. It should be done safely, weighing all the data and the recommendations of our trusted health officials, with the health of all our students, staff and faculty at the forefront of the decisions.

I am addressing here the health, safety and best interest of our students. There are more people to consider as well: teachers, staff, bus drivers, volunteers, parents, and more. I speak as a mother of four, a mother of students with complicated health issues, a mother of middle school and elementary school students.

My family has been fortunate to not have had COVID-19 yet, but we have friends whose children are now dealing with the effects of COVID-19. Multi-system inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) as a result of COVID-19 should scare you. While "most" children who develop COVID-19 only have a mild case, the small percentage of children who suffer the effects of MIS-C should be what we all think about when we consider sending our students and children back into school buildings, risking possible exposure before the data suggests that a safe return to school is feasible.

An autoimmune inflammatory response to an infection might seem like a radical, crazy idea, but it's one that my children have been living with for the past 6 years. MIS-C scares me, but it does not surprise me. My children have been diagnosed with PANDAS and PANS - Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Strep (PANDAS) and Pediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS)...

Valerie Shinnamon

Severna Park Middle School, Folger McKinsey Elementary School and Homeschool Parent

Folger McKinsey Elementary School PTO President

91. Hello,

Please include this in the testimony log for the BOE Meeting on 1/14/2020. My name is Amy Adams and I currently have 3 children enrolled in Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Two at South River High School and One at Central Middle School. My husband and I both work full time. There is no amount of written testimony or empirical data that can accurately demonstrate the dire situation that AACPS students are currently facing. Therefore, I am extending an open invitation to all AACPS board members, administrators and County Officials to visit our home in order to fully experience a day of virtual schooling and see first hand how inferior and unproductive it is. Please come and personally witness the immeasurable anxiety, weariness and tears that virtual schooling elicits on a daily basis.

The achievement gap is widening every hour our children have to stare into a computer screen, click some buttons, watch videos and end up teaching themselves the material. Maryland used to be #1 in education and now the results from Fall testing show otherwise. The negative and profound effect on their mental health is not even something I can process at this point. Just because I can start my car with my iPhone does not mean that a student should learn Chemistry or AP Gov via the same platform.

There is now a vaccine and there must be an end game or resolution for this situation. Schools have never been guaranteed to be completely safe and risk free; nothing in life is risk free....

Amy Adams

92. Our children have been out of the in-person learning model for far too long. It's time to get them back in school & as proven from several recent studies (link below), this can be done safely. By wearing masks and monitoring symptoms, we can safely open our schools! Masks work!!

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2021/01/three-studies-highlight-low-covid-risk-person-school>

We can not ask our children to sit in front of a screen any longer. They need (& want!) in person learning, structure, & socialization with their peers. My boys ask daily when they can go to "real school". Heartbreaking. Keeping kids home is hurting their mental health, and it's emotionally draining. My children dread logging into school each day which is so sad. My 3rd grader has always loved school but his entire attitude has changed since being remote. He has shut down. Let them get back into school and sports and activities. Other states are doing it and doing it successfully!

It's our job to stand up for what is best for our children. Give us the option to return to in person learning! I'm sad to say if schools do not reopen in February, my husband and I have decided to pull our boys and homeschool immediately then complete registration for private school in the fall. While we love RKE, our children come first and they need in person learning. AACPS will face a huge decrease in enrollment should this continue which means a significant decrease in funding for the coming year. Reopen AACo schools!

Haley Cherba
Rolling Knolls Elementary

93. Hello, my name is Kristen Murphy and I am currently a senior at Severna Park High School. I am reaching out to you today to address not only my own feelings, but also 518 of my classmates'. First, we will address my thoughts as I progressively reach not only the end of my high school career, but the end of my childhood.

Here I am, watching private schools that are less than 5 minutes away from my house attend school each day while I'm sitting at my desk, staring at a screen, in total silence wondering how long it's been since I've seen any of these people in real life. Driving past these schools' outdoor fields and watching people play sports makes me remember all of the hard work I put in to practicing volleyball in order to earn a starting position on my school's team and become a senior team captain. This October would have been my last homecoming. My friends and I didn't go to the dance last year because we thought we would save the money and save the fun for our senior year, the last dance with everyone we walked past in the halls and shared the building with. Who knew my sophomore year would have actually been the final one.

I will never get to spend my day during spirit week going to the bathroom each period trying to fix a sheet I put on in the morning to look like a toga and spend the whole day staring at the clock counting down the minutes until our last pep rally that the band students and dance classes had spent months and months practicing to reveal to their classmates...

94. Dear Members of the Board,

I am writing to you as the parent of a first and third grader. My first grader attends Crofton Woods and my third grader, as of Monday, attends Monsignor Slade. Although both of my kids dislike e-learning, it works ok for one and not the other. I am writing to represent all the parent's that want a choice to allow

our children to go back to school. My daughter began crying a couple months ago every morning. Then she started complaining that her brow bone hurt all the time. During this time she also began stimming for a few minutes every hour. Another month passed and my husband and I noticed she was stimming ALL FOUR HOURS she was e-learning. That is when we made the heart wrenching decision to listen to her and pull her. I called every private school within a 30 mile radius of my home. Only 2 schools had third grade openings and luckily, Slade was one of them. I got her right in. After her first day of school, she got in the car full of life, told us everything she did that day, and said to me, "please never make me do e-learning again." It broke my heart that we waited this long to get her into school. She was crying out and my husband and I were ABLE to help her. What about the parent's that don't have the means to help their students? My son is continuing e-learning for now, but he can't wait to go back to school...

Thank you,
Lyndsey Overstreet

95. Lauren Thornton Mother of Bradley (4th) & Nixon (K) Greenwell Deale, MD Deale Ele

We are 2 months away from 1 YEAR of virtual (minus summer). This has to end at some point. Are you looking at the possible long term effects of 100% virtual learning? Can you tell me when my son will receive IN PERSON speech therapy? When taking him to a follow up visit at Hopkins yesterday, they asked me when will he start receiving in person speech again because he desperately needs it. My answer was ask the teachers union & AACPS. He qualifies for ELS, so we are actually TEN whole months into this virtually. He is supposed to be working on air flow, placement of the tongue and other things that I do not see virtual speech helping. I absolutely love his therapist, this is not her fault. It's yours. The amount of money (\$15,000 to be exact) that I am paying for daycare (not including summer) I wish we had a private school in my area. I used to email everyday with my concerns but none of that matters, clearly and I am tired. My kids want to go to school so bad. Nixon was at Carrie Weedon last year and loved it, now everyday he tells me he hates daycare b/c he hates doing school on a computer, what a great way to start elementary school. LET US MAKE THE DECISION! SCHOOL IS ESSENTIAL

SCHOOL IS ESSENTIAL. LET THEM BACK

96. Dear Board Members:

As a parent of two middle schoolers, I'm am pleading with you to reopen schools. The reasons are more than tenfold, but the main direct impact to my children includes:

- **Poor performance** - My children are suffering huge losses in learning and experiencing grade drops like never before. It is more common than not for grades to be C or D and these are typically A and B students. The standardized test grades taken by my kids were far below grade level (first time ever) and it is clear virtual learning is not a style that works for them.

- **Lack of engagement** - There is little to no motivation to learn and pay attention to what's being taught. Cameras seem to be optional and kids have little to no accountability to the teachers to engage (speaking or visually) and relationships are hard (if not impossible) to develop. As teens/pre-teens, motivation is hard enough as it is, but the virtual setting does not allow for much personal accountability. While we do our best as two working parents to police and ensure attentiveness, there is NO substitute for the accountability of in person instruction.

- **Emotional distress** - Middle school is a time for personal growth in terms of relationships, understanding the world around them and finding their way as people. It is also a time for meeting new people from different places and this social growth is not just stymied, but causing harm. This extreme isolation from fellow classmates is creating a terrible emotional toll on my children...

Sincerely,

Marina Anglim

Parent of 6th/8th graders in Magothy River Middle

97. To Superintendent Arlotto & AACPS Board members and others involved in getting our kids back to In-Person school:

Like many others before me, I am writing to you today as a concerned and overwhelmed parent. Currently, I have three children in AACPS schools in Annapolis. One is a senior "attending" Broadneck High School and the other two are eighth graders, one "attending" Magothy River Middle and the other Severn River Middle (my nephew now resides with us during the school week).

Since online schooling has started this year, I have increasingly seen my kids' physical & mental health deteriorate. They have grown more sedentary, solitary, depressed and are agitated more easily. My youngest daughter now says she would rather be alone much of the day whereas before she was happy to be with friends and playing sports. My nephew enjoyed being part of the flag football team this past fall through Cape Youth Sports and was looking forward to a basketball season, but even that got cancelled.

For my oldest, we had to seek a mental health professional last week and will continue to pay for her to have sessions to alleviate the stresses and pressures she already feels as a senior who has had her whole senior year stolen from her. My daughter is not alone in these feelings of hopelessness and apathy. Back in the spring of 2020, we had the Crisis Team come to our home to tell us of one of her friends taking his life; he was a BHS student. So many of our teens are crying out for help and it seems there is an obvious answer and solution: return our kids to IN PERSON schooling ASAP!...

Sincerely,

Sandy Shute

Mother and former AACPS employee

98. Good morning,

I have testified twice and believe we owe it to our families in Anne Arundel County to provide them with a CHOICE by reopening our schools. Please finalize metrics and a timeline to get these kids back and be ready to implement it as soon as it's feasible. Please read the article linked below, providing important insight from Dr. Joseph Allen, a Harvard University T.H. Chan School of Public Health of exposure and assessment science professor. He provides an important perspective. These two quotes struck me:

"Allen believes there is a false assumption that kids who aren't physically in school are at home in lockdown. They have wider social networks than people realize, he said, which leads to increased

contacts throughout the community and beyond. Schools, on the other hand, have controlled environments and can reduce the amount of contacts, inside the school or outside of it, for students."

AND

"Allen was asked if Dane County's 50 cases per 100,000 was high. He said wouldn't characterize it as low community spread, but he asked, "Does that trigger school closings? I don't think it does." Allen also doesn't think that the amount of cases should be the only data used in determining if schools should be reopened. There's a bigger picture to consider, he feels."

Please see the article in its entirety:

https://www.hngnews.com/milton_courier/news/covid-19/article_7fa55c83-54f8-5241-b2d0-6478c38fff31.html

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Mary Cascio, Crofton

99. Dear members,

I am a parent of an SRHS sophomore. Originally I planned for him to take advantage of the hybrid plan, but after seeing the surge in cases and deaths, I cannot in good confidence risk exposure.

I would advise to NOT do what others in power have done and ignore the science. We have a health official in Anne Arundel County to make these decisions and advise us using the science. The guidelines were established over the summer and they should not be ignored now. The community spread has increased 50% since the beginning of the year. Deaths are increasing, too.

If you vote to send these kids and teachers back, and infections and deaths occur in the schools, it is on your heads. Can you truly live with that?

Michael Witles

Edgewater, MD

100. Good afternoon,

My name is Jennifer Morrison and my 5 year old son goes to Jacobsville Elementary. Please include this in the testimony log for the BOE meeting on 1/14/20.

I feel like I have fought for months and the Board of Ed has made no further decisions. I'm baffled by the lack of planning and possibilities. I'm getting continually surveyed (example- to gain funds for the schools) when I as a parent feel like the Board of Education and Superintendent have done nothing to get our kids into school. Why would we want to fill out surveys for you all? We as parents feel like all you do is talk talk and NO action on anything.

My main point comes from frustration in the fact that I have family in other states, and their kids are going to School FULL TIME. Their metrics are as bad or WORSE THAN OURS. How is it possible that they are finding a way to do it and we CAN'T. UNIONS? I will tell you the south does not have a problem with Unions. WHY are the questions I have. I don't want to hear about health metrics or that no one feels safe. These kids are dying inside. They are NOT learning.

DO SOMETHING.

Thank you,

Jennifer

Pasadena MD.

101. Dear Board of Education Members,

I write to you today as a parent of two AACPS elementary-age daughters and as an AACPS educator. The weight of the decisions that you have had to hold over the past 9 months, I'm sure haven't been easy. COVID-19, its toll on our economy, our families, socialization, and mental health has been exhausting. It is also unfortunate that the times that you, our BOE, have had to address re-opening, has coincided with upheaval in our nation, increasing emotion and stress levels among all of our AACPS families, employees, and yourselves. I ask you today to strongly consider postponing the opening of our schools until the 4th marking period. As an educator with AACPS for 20 years and as a parent of a 2nd and 5th grader who can see the toll on children, I hope that you will continue to read my letter and consider the points that I offer.

April 15, 2021 is the beginning of the 4th marking period. If we re-open for 4th marking period, we can be assured that all teachers, administrators, and support staff will have the opportunity to be vaccinated with both doses of the vaccine to ensure the highest effective rate possible. Both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines will provide a 95% effective rate after the second dose. The first dose of the vaccine will provide some protection to individuals (Moderna at 70%, Pfizer at 85%) but waiting until the second dose is administered will provide greater protection, lessen anxiety among educators, and may reduce the amount of educators requiring accommodations...

Sincerely,

Lindsay Morgan, Edgewater

102. Please Re-Open Schools. Why?

- My 3 elementary age children are significantly lagging in fundamental skills that are almost impossible to teach virtually.
- Because you are putting the families that have chosen to educate their children in the Public school system in a no-win position. We either accept that our children will receive a sub-standard education virtually or pay huge sums of money, that many can ill afford, to send them to private schools.
- DISADVANTAGED is not a word that I ever expected to use when describing my own children.
- This situation is robbing our children of the joys of childhood. My boys left school as 3rd graders and will return as 5th graders (assuming they return at all). They are returning as different children. The state of the world is not within the BOE's control, but it is in your control to secure and protect the education of your students. Give them a safe environment, surrounded by teachers that revel in teaching and allow them the fruits of an elementary school life. My kids should have experimented with brass instruments, choir, afterschool activities that are at the

very core of the childhood experience. In a blink, the years that were supposed to form little beings into strong and opinionated pre -teens are almost over. We can't lose another day! Please, please take the cries from the parents under serious consideration. My family is one of the lucky ones and we are still suffering. I can't imagine what it is like for families that struggle to make ends meet...

Gillian T. DuVall
Broadneck

103. Board of Education and Superintendent Arlotto,

I am Jorge Cordoba, ESOL Teacher at Arundel High School and father of two students that attend Arundel Middle School.

On Monday 1/11/2021 the infection rate in our county was of 63.4 per 100k; COVID-19 is spreading in Anne Arundel County more widely than in two – thirds of other Maryland jurisdictions. Please listen to the facts and the county's health department recommendations.

The CDC reports that Hispanic children are approximately eight times more likely and Afro American children five times more likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 than their white peers. Most ESOL students are Hispanic and many do not have medical insurance. Bringing them back to the school buildings would become an unmitigated catastrophe.

Last Friday my mother passed away due to COVID-19 complications and I do not want any one in our county to go through what my family and I are going through. Any reopening plan will bring harm to our communities. Lives are more important than temporary disappointment for students and certain parents. You should consider reopening only when educators, staff and bus drivers have been vaccinated and the infection rate is lower.

Jorge Cordoba

104. Dear members of the School Board and student representative,

I write this to you as a parent of two middle school students asking that you strongly consider reopening schools in a hybrid environment. Since March of 2020, I have seen my kids' behavior, grades, social skills, and love of learning in sharp decline with the shutdown. I am well aware that there would be risks involved with them moving into an in-person environment but in my mind, the risks far outweigh the costs that they have been paying.

I try my best as a parent to help my kids but I am afraid what they really need is friends, other adult role models, and most importantly positive peer pressure. The schools have done their best to provide the best online environment they can and you have done a wonderful job in improving that experience, but as I look at my kids' testing scores I cannot deny that they are falling behind. Both of my children were honor roll or near honor roll students before the shutdown and since then they have both struggled with their grades, behavior, and frankly, their growth as young men has been retarded.

I know this is a difficult process but there are other schools in the area that have provided a successful hybrid model to draw upon. My two nieces in Pennsylvania have had in-person school for most of the school and they have been doing great. I just don't quite understand how we can't provide a similar

environment in Anne Arundel County with not only these examples but also a much strong understanding of how to deal with COVID 19 and a vaccine available for our teachers?...

Brian Anglim, Magothy River Middle

105. The combined 60 minutes of Community Wellness/Tools for Success for Middle Schoolers. These classes tend to be unproductive and superficial, filled with busy work and lacking purposeful connections. Tools for Success points at skills and technology that the teachers are not able to teach or that the students have long utilized. Allocating this time for students to work independently or in small groups with teachers would be more productive.

The “camera-always-on” policy. I am going to be extremely frank, my students are participating in a classroom, however when cameras are on, every person within view of that camera is also a guest in my home. There are numerous times throughout the learning day where guests do not need to be invited into my home. A camera on does not mean engagement. Engagement is utilizing all tools available to interact with others in the virtual environment.

We are building a new normal within our homes that includes terms like social distancing, mask mandates and COVID-19. The students are required to be flexible and resilient to the many changes, while being shown models of educators who are openly airing their frustrations regarding these changes brought upon society.

I believe it is time for educators to realize that a virtual learning environment should not be weakly modeled on the traditional in-person learning environment. It is time for educators to re-think the learning process and create a space where autonomy, initiative and learning all occur at the same time.

Submitted Respectfully,

Denise Miller

Arnold, MD

Parent Broadneck Cluster

106. I have a first grader at Broadneck Elementary and, like many elementary school students, she has now regressed in the key areas of literary and math because of the ineffectiveness of a virtual online learning platform for elementary school students. Her teacher can only do so much over a computer to assist her, and we know from child education research that young children learn best through play, socialization, and personal interaction and engagement with their teachers and peers. The time has come for the BOE to give parents and students the choice as to whether or not they should return to the classroom under a hybrid model. An important distinction is that the hybrid model being proposed would not require any parent to return his or her child to the classroom if they do not feel comfortable doing so, and it simply gives parents the choice for their children to return to the building. We have learned a lot about the safety of schools and transmission rates among children since the decision was made over the summer to return to school with a 100% virtual learning environment, and it is time for the BOE to move us forward instead of holding us in a stagnant position that is no longer supported by the research. The current model is not working for parents, teachers, and - most of all - the students in this school system and I urge the BOE to adopt the hybrid model.

– Julie Murray

Broadneck Cluster

107. Good Afternoon,

I am a 65 year old teacher from Towson Maryland who has had to stay home due to Covid 19 giving up my job at a Baltimore County Independent School. My son is a dedicated mathematics teacher in the Anne Arundel Public Schools. His name is Christian Bonn and he teaches at Old Mill High School. Please continue to follow health metrics to make your decisions. Teachers, administrators and students are working together virtually and learning is going well. With case rates as they are keeping all safe is exceedingly difficult. Also many people are reluctant to mask up. I hope you will wait until proper vaccinations can take place to let schools open. Your time and thoughtful deliberations are so appreciated.

Thank you,

Christina Garvan

Towson Maryland

108. Hello!

Since March of 2020, my 4th grade daughter and 7th grade son have been in virtual school in the AACPS system. I 100% agreed with your decision on why we, as a country, need to put a pause on life as we were trying to figure out and contain this virus, how it spreads, how to develop a vaccine for it. We have all made the sacrifices needed during this stage.

But now I feel like we have come to the stage where we are now educated enough to slowly get back to normal life and I think the hybrid school plan is the way to do this. More and more of our friends and family members are getting vaccinated, distancing and masks have become the norm. The private schools that have been in session since September have also proven that children can be a part of this.

My kids are suffering. They want to meet their teachers, see their friends, walk through their school buildings again, sit at their own desks. They need to go back to a semi-normal/familiar life. It has been almost a year - way too long for these young people to understand. Even returning 2 days a week would make such a huge impact for them on an emotional level.

I can't speak for all children, but my daughter in particular has checked out of learning over the past few months. It is a daily struggle for her to pay attention and sit in front of her computer, and then complete assignments when school is over...

Kari Mack

109. Dear BOE member,

I am writing regarding the AACPS reopening timeline. My questions and concerns are as follows:

- Why is AACPS virtual when almost 2/3 of the nation's public school are open in some capacity? The golden standard for AACPS has been the metric of cases per 100K. Why? If you look

elsewhere you find school districts with successfully open schools with higher community case rates. Medford Township NJ has a case rate of **71.7** and their schools are hybrid. Nassau County NY has a case rate of **115.5** and are fully open. There have been no outbreaks in these schools and they have been open since September. The examples go on and on. Cases per 100K is **NOT** an appropriate metric for school openings.

- Our children are falling behind, as much of the country reopens. **A precedent for managing schools in this pandemic has been set but AACPS is ignoring it at the risk of our children's mental health and education.**
- There have been several scientific studies showing schools have **NOT** been the cause of community COVID outbreaks. I urge you to research them. Despite this information, student education is continued to be sacrificed.

My questions continue, but I wish to be concise. I urge the BOE to trust the safety measures that have been outlined in the opening plan and look at the science that supports schools reopening. Do not let our students fall behind the rest of the country.

Sincerely,

Mary Casciano, parent of a Kindergartener and 3rd grader

Folger McKinsey Elementary

110. My name is Kim Humphrey, I am a parent to two children in the Crofton cluster. I have a middle school daughter and a high school daughter.

I am writing to urge you to put a plan in place for middle and high school students to have the option to return to an in person option. Please give them the option to return in person. We are losing so many kids to the current system of virtual learning. I understand we are in a pandemic and some prefer a virtual model but for the ones that don't, give them the option to return to school as we have seen our private schools do and operate very successfully!

These kids are lost, frustrated and don't feel valued. Give them hope back, give them stability, give them options!

Listen! These kids are crying out and looking for support, isn't that what we should give them. Isn't that what we preach. Other states on the public level are doing this successfully, it's time for you to follow! NOW!

Kim Humphrey

111. It is time for AACPS to move forward and in-person for the second semester. The fear during spring that schools are super-spreaders is not supported by current research (World Health Org., Brown University, Duke University, just to name a few.) Please show us otherwise. The students will wear masks and alternate days, and countless parents have agreed to drive their children to ease transportation. What else is required? The risk while everyone is wearing a mask is "very low" (too many sources to cite.) We are mitigating risk, but it is impossible to eliminate it. If public schools across the

country are safely operating, I do not understand why our system is on hold. I am pleading with you to spend what precious time is left creating a plan to open all classrooms doors for the entire second semester.

Lindsey Dryer, Severna Park

112. This is a letter from my son William 'Harrison' DuVall. He also in the 4th grade at Broadneck Elementary.

It reads: I want to go back to school because I want to see my teacher and get better at writing. I would like to see my friends everyday. I love coming to school because I get to see my friends, my old teachers and new teachers. I love recess and playing with my friends on the court. I also get to make new friends.

113. Good afternoon,

As an educator, I believe that schools can safely reopen. I am the preschool director of a school in Pasadena serving 2-5 old students. I submitted a health and safety plan to the health department to show I am committed to the health and safety of our students during this time of the Covid pandemic.

My school is proof that it CAN be done. There are dozens of private schools in the area that open because it CAN be done. My staff are wearing masks, the students are wearing masks and there is so much laughter in the building that it makes my heart smile each time I walk by a classroom.

I am asking for a choice. A choice for my children and the many others who seek an in person education to have an option that works for them. The virtual model has proven to be very unsuccessful for many families. At this point, I do not feel that AACPS is being funded for an adequate education. This is a concern on many levels and one that I hope is solved in the next board meeting on January 14th. We need to do better for our students.

Thank you for your time and consideration of those who want to return to in person learning.

Jenn Farrelly, Riviera Beach

AACPS parent of 2

114. Hello AACPS Board of Education members and Dr. Arlotto,

My name is Michael Vazquez. I am the parent of a pre-K child and a 2nd grade student in District 3: the Chesapeake cluster in Pasadena, MD. I am also a teacher for students who have special educational needs.

During this time of crisis dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the most pressing concerns has continued to revolve around the in-person vs virtual education of our children. As board members, most of you have continually stated publicly that you would **adhere to the metrics established by the health department and heed the warnings of experts such as Dr. Arlotto and Dr. Kalyanaraman regarding their expertise in the fields of education and health.**

As such, you previously voted as a board to suspend in-person learning through the 1st semester of the school year as metrics at the time of the vote were too high to comfortably and successfully open schools. At that time you presented the opportunity for parents, students, and teachers to complete a survey regarding their comfort with returning to school. At that time, you also established a loose "plan" for return that did not clearly state health-guidelines that parents and students must follow, and for teachers and school administrators to adhere to in order to give our most-at-risk students the opportunity to return safely.

As this pandemic wears on, and as new members have joined the board, it has become clear that a few members seek simply to open the schools without a clear plan. The plan put forth at the request of the former Board of Education is **not even supported by the Superintendent** who provided it, and it sets forth no clear baseline metrics or methods for establishing when a return to in-person learning should be considered or implemented...

Michael J. Vazquez

115. Hello, and thank you for your consideration.

As a parent of a 4th grader, 6th grader, 8th grader and 10th grader in the Severna Park school district, I am writing to urge the board to get our kids back to school.

The fact that other PUBLIC school districts as well as countless private schools have successfully returned to in person learning proves that it is possible.

The damage that we are doing to our children is at this time immeasurable.
The kids need to go back - period.

Thank You,

Jeff Jeffers

21146

116. Good Evening,

I know each of you has likely been bombarded with emails and phone calls from stakeholders eager to share their concerns, so I thank you for your time.

My child is an ECI Student who is deaf/blind and attends Central Special. I hope when things get back to a new normal, each one of you will take a moment to stop by and see the incredible things that happen at that school.

My child, in addition to being both deaf and blind, has significant medical concerns. Ones that include a lot of equipment that we lovingly refer to as our "mobile ICU". I'd like to tell you I'm being facetious when I say that, but I'm not. It's critical you have that background knowledge as you read some of my concerns.

You see, my son had the opportunity in the fall to receive in person instruction. He did so without wearing a mask, because he couldn't. He is physically unable to wear his mask because, you see, in addition to being deaf/blind, he also has chronic respiratory distress, chronic lung disease, hypoxia episodes (he turns blue because he stops breathing), and uses a pulse ox to monitor his oxygen levels.

He also has seizures as a result of overheating. *I'm sure you can imagine why wearing a mask would be next to impossible for him.*

In the fall, this opportunity was taken from him because the "metrics were too high". Totally understand that, the numbers were slowly rising. We understood, but were disappointed, as virtual learning is unequivocally inaccessible to him...

Sincerely,

Lori Kane

Edgewater, MD

Parent of an ECI student at Central Special School

117. I have two kids in Benfield Elementary. Virtual learning has been very difficult for my kids. I don't understand why private schools have been able to go to school FULL TIME since September and our schools can't figure it out? There cannot be a big difference between a Catholic School in Baltimore and our schools. There cannot be a big difference between all of Europe's school system and our schools. Why have their schools been open since June and ours haven't? If you can give us a good reason then we would love to hear it. I feel sad for our kids that adults' arguments and politics get in the way of their education and from doing the right thing.

Anne Strzegowski

118. This is for public comment. My name is Britta Ward. I live in Severna Park Maryland. I am a teacher for AACPS.

Our current health metrics are no way in line with a re-opening this February. Our current case rate is over 60 cases/100,000-that is 4 times what was recommended in the Fall. As per Governor Hogan we now also have cases of the UK variant strain of Covid in our county. This strain has been shown to be more contagious and more harmful to children. As of 1/7 the state positivity rate was 9.16 and our county was higher by almost a full percentage point at 10.13. Hospitalizations have increased dramatically since the fall with no trend of slowing down.

Dr. K's recommendation was for the vaccine rollout to begin and allow teachers to get vaccinated and afford us some protection before going back. Teachers are in the 1B group and our county is not even through with the 1A rollout. We need time to get vaccinated and allow it to help our immunity against Covid 19.

Please vote to wait to reopen until the county is in a better position. We cannot rush in to this or open up and just hope it all works out. This may literally be a case of life or death. Protect our schools.

-Britta Ward

119. Dear BOE Members,

I am a parent of a sophomore at SRHS in Edgewater and a Kindergarten teacher at AES.

In the first survey we selected hybrid for our son. We were confident that safety guidelines would be put in place to keep him as safe as possible at school by following health metrics and guidelines.

As the second semester approaches and we find ourselves in a surge in our county, I am shocked that anyone is even considering opening schools soon. I am stunned and saddened that so many would go against health metrics and medical advice during a pandemic. Luckily, as a parent I have a choice for my son. So, on the recent survey we changed to virtual.

I am heartbroken that as an educator I might have to choose between a job that I love, students that I love, and my family's well-being. In December, my teammate was hospitalized for 5 days with COVID and out of work for weeks. In January, my other teammate's husband ended up in ICU for three days intubated but thankfully recovered. My son had to deal with the fact that one of his teacher's lost his young wife.

If we open schools, there will be **more spread**. We will **NOT** have enough staff to cover classrooms, just look at Carroll County. Let teachers at least get their vaccines first since they are the most at risk. Loss of learning can be remedied, loss of life cannot.

Sincerely,

Maria Witles

120. We are secretaries in a middle school. We continue to work from home as well as in our building on a rotating schedule. We make sure the office is covered Monday through Friday from 8am – 4pm daily and we support our admin and teachers in every way we can. Each of us has been affected by COVID having friends and/or family that have been sick and, in some cases, died from the virus. With this rotation in place, we all feel safe and at the same time we can keep our office running smoothly. With only a small number of teachers working from the building we are in contact with a limited number of people and can easily trace anyone we were in contact with if necessary. With the infection rate more than 6 times higher than it was in the fall and rising I ask that you keep things the way they are until the vaccine can be administered and the case rate falls to a manageable rate. If all employees are required to return the building our risk of infection will be greatly increased. Although none of us applied for accommodations, we are all around the age of 60 and some of us have health issues and/or take care of family members with health issues. We have worked for the BOE for many years with over 75 years between us and realize the importance of getting back to a normal school setting. However, currently the risk is too high, especially now that a vaccine is becoming available...

Susan C. Howard

Sandra Zimmerman

Vanessa Cain

Virginia Anderson

Lindale Middle School

121. Dear Members of the Board of Education.

My name is Megan Matthews and my daughter attends Crofton Woods Elementary school. I am writing to you today to express my concerns regarding your upcoming meeting on the reopening of the schools. I first want to say that I am not opposed to opening schools and want my daughter to get in the classroom. However, I do not agree with how you are going about reopening schools. My concerns are as follows:

1. There was talk about conducting a true needs assessment to see what students are struggling and how they are struggling. Is it because they don't have access to reliable internet, is it because of social distancing, or is it because they need to be in person with their teacher? Without this needs assessment, you will not know which group needs to return first.

2. Do teachers teach students both online and in person, really help improve students' education? The teachers are now going to struggle to meet the needs of the students that are in front of them and the ones online. More students are going to get lost. The students that were successful being virtual are now going to struggle because they are no longer getting the attention they need.

3. The numbers are just too high. You are talking about going against the recommendations of Dr. Kalyanaraman. With teachers not having the vaccine you are putting them at greater risk. I understand the schools are not a great source of transmission.
 - a. If teachers get the vaccinations prior to opening what about the bus drivers, custodians, and other support staff?...

Megan Matthews

122. Dear Board Members,

I just have a few things for you to consider before making a final decision.

How effective do you think the hybrid model is going to be? Have you spent any time in a virtual elementary classroom? Do you realize how hard it is to keep 20 six-year-olds engaged for 2 hours at a time? Where is the quality of the education going to be?

If a teacher needs to keep an eye on the group in the class AND the ones virtually at home someone is going to miss out. I can tell you this, if you think the virtual model is failing our kids wait for this hybrid plan.

In just a 30 minute Math lesson today I had a student standing on a chair, hiding under a blanket and pointing a pencil at their eye. Not to mention the many times I had to assist to find the link for the lesson in the chat box or solve technology issues.

And with all that being said my students did a pretty good job on the lesson. This all done with the students right in front of the teacher. How do you expect a quality of an education when the teacher's attention is half and half? Teachers are already juggling so much.

No one can tell me the quality of the education will increase with a model that requires a teacher to teach both virtual and in person at the same time.

Thank you for reading.

Heather Neish

Millersville Elementary

123. Good Evening BOE members,

The decision of when to open for in-person learning is not about what anyone wants to do. It is about what is safest for our entire community. Listen to our Health Officer. Follow the data for county infection rates. Though we have pandemic fatigue, we cannot act as if it is over. Protect our students, teachers, staff, and their families.

Dr. Kalyanaraman, our county medical expert, clearly stated, he is not ready to discuss reopening schools until March, after the vaccine has been given and after our hospitalizations have decreased. Please respect the expert! Accept you are not the medical experts.

The messy hybrid plan has not changed. It is still messy. It is not developmentally appropriate. It is not educationally sound. It is not best practices, nor does it utilize differentiated instructional strategies. Please do not ask teachers or students to participate in something so very wrong.

-Everyone is 6 feet apart, learning independently with our faces covered. Which age group is this an appropriate educational model? What is differentiated?

-Large gatherings will not be organized. What does this mean? Will large gatherings be disorganized? Which age group is this an appropriate educational model? What is differentiated?

-Instructional materials will not be shared. Which age group is this an appropriate educational model? What is differentiated?

-In person 2 consecutive days a week/virtual learning 3 days a week. Disruption of current established schedules. Which age group is this an appropriate educational model? What is differentiated? Please respect the experts. Accept that you are not the educational experts...

Marie Talios (Annapolis 21403 resident)

Brooklyn Park Middle School (21225 Magnet Teacher)

124. Dear Board Members-

I am the parent of a first grader at Broadneck elementary. I am pleading with you to reopen schools hybrid as originally planned for February. My son has suffered greatly since schools closed down last March. He loves school, is a great student who loves to learn. While his grades have held, his love of learning is disappearing as each month goes by and I worry about the long term impact this will have on his enthusiasm for education. The computer does not hold his attention, he is restless and combative throughout the day as he is forced to be online. His teacher tries her best but I would say there is maybe 5 minutes of actual learning in one 30 minute class section and he spends the majority of the time listening to her correct other students work and behavior while he is bored to tears. Literal tears. My son has always been a strong, smart, confident kid who now routinely gets so frustrated with his work he will scream and cry that he's stupid and his teacher hates him. Virtual learning is having a severe impact on our children's mental health. Let us not forget the social impact of online vs in school learning at a critical developmental time for grade school students.

Schools have reopened safely all across the world, this country and within our state. My daughter has been going to preK successfully since September without incident. My husband and I work for the airlines and have been flying this entire year without incident...

Patricia Brett

Parent of Noah Brett, 1st grade Broadneck Elementary

125. Hello,

Our names are Melissa and Jim Davis, we have two boys, a third grader and a kindergarten at Severna Park Elementary School.

We have several questions and are hoping to get some answers. We are realistic and understand that we are currently navigating a pandemic. For the last several months we have been told that the vaccine will be the answer to get school re-open. Per Governor Hogan teachers will be fast tracked to receive the vaccine. Our concern is what is the BOE and AACPS doing to get schools reopened. Once the vaccines are given and the metrics drop there is no plan. Since March we have logged onto several board meetings, there always seem to be multiple agenda items that have nothing to do with the current crisis we are dealing with. Until schools reopen or there is a concrete plan to reopen school all other agenda items should be tabled. Re-opening schools should be the board's number one priority. Also, I am not sure why AACPS and the BOE are trying to reinvent the wheel. There are several bigger school systems in the US who have opened successfully. Are we reviewing their plans to see what works? Lastly to people who say that this is just about working parents that is not the case for our family. We both work full time and our boys have been attending the SACC program at Pasadena Elementary since September. We are very fortunate to have this option for our boys and the means to pay for this option however we need to know there is light at the end of the tunnel...

126. As a teacher in second grade at Eastport Elementary, I miss seeing my students in person and look forward to the day we meet. However, the skyrocketing caseload of Covid-19 in Anne Arundel County is very concerning. I believe we should go back as soon as the staff have had the opportunity to receive a vaccine. Because teachers and staff have been moved into category 1B, this day is not far off. Please wait until this occurs. We aren't talking about an irrational fear of spiders. The fear is our children, our

teachers, our community leaders, our families, our neighbors falling ill. The real fear, is losing more lives to this virus. My life, other teachers lives, and your life, cannot be replaced.

Sincerely,

Mary Peabody

127. Hello- my daughter attends Annapolis high school and is a current sophomore. She has dealt with anxiety and bullying through her elementary and middle years at a local private school. She decided to attend Annapolis high and has been thriving. Or had been thriving before COVID. She met a great group of friends and was very active with sports and clubs. She was so happy and we were thrilled that she finally found her place.

Since she has been home, she has gone into a depression and her anxiety has come back with a vengeance. She is a straight A student but she feels as though it is so difficult to sit in front of a computer all day with no social interaction.

I implore you to find a way to send these kids back to school. Find a way to make it safe for the teachers. Find a way to make it safe for everyone. If the private schools can do it- the a big conglomerate like AACPS and the BOE can do it too. The survey that went out to families this summer stated that 81% of parents that filled out the survey wanted their children in the classroom at least hybrid. Do the taxpayers, parents and children have a say? I fee like the decision is so one sided and always has been. There are things that can be done to keep people safe. Even when the positivity rate was 3% . There was a vote to continue virtual- why?...

Tina Dunn

128. Good evening. My daughter is an 8th grade student in AACPS's. Usually she is excelling in school which flows over into her emotional, psychological and physical areas in life. Bit, not with virtual learning.

Last week, after losing a whole week of Christmas break to her sleeping in at her Dad's and doing no make up work, I picked her up, had to practically drag her out of bed, sit her on the couch, turn on her laptop, take her phone and start looking up resources for assignments that were either past due or coming due. And this is after working outside the home for a full day.

Currently she has four E's and seemed to think until a recent talk that extracurricular classes don't matter. I found myself replying out of frustration to one of her teachers in an recent email, "I'm dying over here working fulltime (out of the home) and trying to help my daughter do her schoolwork.

She is so unmotivated. And, although her dad and I live very close to one another, when she's at his house, there is not as much checking with regards to her being up on time, being off her phone for a set aside time in order to do schoolwork, and ensuring she's off the phone by a certain time so she can sleep.

Since the beginning of the school year, she has missed Community Wellness at least 25 times. I go in from 10 to 6 so I can try to make sure she's online before I leave...

Sincerely,

Christine Laporte

Crofton, MD.

129. Our teachers are doing an amazing job, given the circumstances. They have gone above and beyond to support my daughter in virtual learning, but it's simply not enough.

My youngest daughter, Caroline, is almost 7 and in first grade. She is still struggling to read and she can barely write (how can you teach a child to write online?), and she is crippled with anxiety when she has to phonetically spell words.

It's difficult for her to navigate digital tools because she can't read. She can read directions, she can't engage with her classmates via Chat, and she can't search for images to input on her assignments, because she can't spell

It's difficult for her to sit and focus on a screen all day. She received a provisional ADHD diagnosis in December, and the psychologist indicated that inattentiveness and hyperactivity may be exacerbated by virtual learning, which further impacts her ability to learn.

She complains of headaches from too much screen time. She cries daily about missing her friends.

My daughter is surviving...but certainly not thriving. She deserves the option to go back to the classroom.

Brannan Villee, Parent, Crofton High School Cluster

130. Dear AACPS School Board Members,

Thank you for choosing to devote your time and efforts to our county schools. As an educator, I know it feels that we rarely hear, "thank you" for working as hard as we all do.

Follow Health Metrics: Please continue to follow the metrics set forth by our County Health Executive. Our current rates are too high! I know you can't please everyone and that isn't your job...**BUT you do have a responsibility to operate SAFE schools and currently that is impossible**, especially with no MOU of safety standards for teachers in place.

As the mother of two AACPS elementary students and as a loyal AACPS Kindergarten teacher (13 years), please delay reopening and focus on a better reopening plan. **Listen to the teachers**...we are the ones who will be asked to implement a plan that we had NO part in developing. Even with a few select teachers as members of the reopening committees that isn't enough insight to help create an appropriate plan. Please ask Dr. Arlotto to talk to us! A survey...questionnaire, anything that comes from the county that shows that they care about our opinions would be welcome.

New Elementary Schedule: A "one-size-fits-all" approach to scheduling across all grade levels doesn't work...**my Kindergarten students don't need any more screen time...as presented in the new**

schedule. Let's encourage Dr. Arlotto to leave schedules alone so that my students can continue to thrive.

Thank you,

Lindy Stansbury

Severna Park

131. My son Brooklyn pickett would like to be back in school to see his friends and make new friends. While he has done somewhat decently with the virtual learning, there is no substitute for in person instruct and being able to make connections with students in person. Parents need to have the choice to send their kid for in person learning.

Chris pickett - Crofton

132. Dear AACPS School Board,

I am a parent of high two achieving children who are suffering every day from the lack of in person schooling. My daughter is in 11th grade at Severna Park High; my son is in 8th grade at Severna Park Middle. We are lucky to have great teachers who are doing their best, but this has gone on too long. My daughter especially is sinking into depression. Her appetite, energy, health, sleep habits, enthusiasm, ability to focus, and optimism are all waning. It is heartbreaking to watch. As a two sport varsity athlete, the sports she love have been taken from her. The beloved teammates, coaches, love of competition, healthy exercise- all gone. She is a shell of her amazing self. SHE NEEDS TO HAVE IN PERSON CLASS TIME (and AACPS sports). Hours and hours and hours on a computer. They need face to face interaction. Please.

My son, who has never struggled in school, especially math, is often in tears in frustration. I see him sinking further and further into isolation. It is a battle we fight every day. He needs his peers. He needs his teachers. He needs your help getting our AACPS students back into schools- through hybrid if necessary, but we need a plan and we need to utilize that plan.

We are an active duty Navy family who moved 4 years ago from Jacksonville, Florida. That county of Duval has over 957,000 people and they have been utilizing hybrid and in person schooling since August...

Thank you again,
Jessica Marsh

133. Unfortunately the 10 allotted speaking spots filled up within seconds so here please find my testimony below.

I again urge you all to please open schools and give parent's the choice of whether they would like their child to return to in-person learning or remain virtual. Parents should be allowed to choose what is best for their children and situation. Parents do not have this choice if schools are closed. We are almost one year into this pandemic and there are very real risks with this virus but reasonable people can certainly have varying viewpoints on what is an acceptable risk for their situation. It struck me that during Dr K's presentation last week when he was discussing the vaccination schedule that the only people on the priority 1b list who have not only never stopped working but also still haven't returned to their actual place of employment are teachers/school personnel. Teachers are indeed essential and so is attending actual school for many students. A parent knows their child's needs best and therefore should be the

ones responsible for the decision as to what method of schooling is best. Just because academically a child is seemingly doing well in the virtual format, this does not mean that the child's social and emotional needs are being met. A virtual platform should be a choice but there needs to also be a choice to return to in-person learning. There is no perfect solution but by offering a choice to parents it allows each parent to weigh the risks and benefits for their student. Please put the responsibility in parents' hands and open schools as scheduled on February 2. Thank you.

-Cheryl Wolf (mother of 3 Folger students)

134. My name is Elizabeth Gammie. My kids go to school in Crofton, MD. Anne Arundel.

I would like to make it known that I would like my children to have the option to return to school. I would like the district to use a common sense approach based in public health guidelines. I feel that my sons mental health and education is suffering having them at home. Their grades are declining and I've had to seek Mental health counseling to address issues that have arisen and worsened throughout this unusual time.

Please get our kids back in school. Do not wait to vaccinate all staff. This is delaying the education of our kids. If a staff member doesn't have immune issues and is not at high risk they should be able to be in school, with a mask. Please focus on case metrics and common sense safety precautions to get the kids back in school.

I understand that COVID is serious. My family is doing everything we can to keep ourselves safe, as well as others however, my kids are falling behind in their education. It would be different if all kids were being kept from school but many are in school and it's working out.

Thanks for listening and taking my letter into consideration.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth

135. Board of Ed:

Please include this in the testimony log for the BOE Meeting 1/14/2021.

While the number of cases of coronavirus has risen nearly everywhere, there is no scientific evidence that schools are the reason. In fact, studies show the opposite--that students in school are less likely to get the virus or transmit it to others. What evidence shows that schools put students and teachers at greater risk of infection? There isn't any.

Since the pandemic's outbreak, officials have assured us that they're following the science. Science tells us quite clearly that distance learning results in worse social, educational, physical and mental health outcomes. Our own son, and many of his friends, are suffering from anxiety and stress from the isolation the school closures have produced.

Science also shows us that students are far less likely to contract or transmit COVID-19 than adults. What evidence do officials have that shows that keeping students at home in their communities, with

inconsistent protections, is safer than our schools, where social distancing and other protective measures can be practiced? Our family's fear is that the Board is making these decisions without any.

Please activate the Board-approved plan for hybrid learning. Students at all levels deserve the opportunity to return to in-person learning now.

Sincerely,
Susan and John Nester
Crofton High parents

136. Dear School Board Members,

I am writing to you tonight as a concerned parent, former teacher, and former school counselor in your county. It is because of all of these things that I strongly feel we need to continue to move forward with getting the students of Anne Arundel County Public Schools back to in person learning. With each month that we let pass (and we are now at month 10) our children are getting further and further behind and the educational gap is widening. Parents with the means to support their children by enrolling them in private school are doing just that and a large portion of our nation is moving full steam ahead with in person learning. It is not like our entire country is on hold and all the students are in the same boat. The students of Anne Arundel County are in the minority when it comes to receiving face to face education, which will in the long term put them further behind their peers throughout the nation.

The current data does not support keeping these kids at home and in front of computers and screens all day long. The current data is saying we are seeing a major decline not only in our children's academic scores but in our children's social and emotional development as well.

I acknowledge that fact that the state and local health metrics are higher than where Dr. K is saying they should be for in person return but you have to ask yourself whether or not the benefits outweigh the risk...

Sincerely,
Cory Greene

Broadneck Elementary Parent of a 1st and 3rd grader

137. To the Members of the Board of Education,

Thank you for your commitment and time. This is an extremely challenging situation we find ourselves in and I acknowledge that there is no perfect answer. However, I am writing **in strong support of children returning to school** as originally planned for in February. If this is not feasible, then as soon as possible. I support offering the choice to return to school because of the negative effects I'm seeing of virtually learning on my own children and those of family and friends, while recognizing that others may have different priorities that are just as important to them (high risk factors for complications from Covid, etc.).

My family is extremely lucky to have children who are hard workers, adaptable, are in an optimal setting for e-learning AND have wonderful, skilled teachers. And yet, the strain is starting to wear on us - my

kids have become less engaged, need more re-direction, and express higher levels of dissatisfaction with learning and school. Children are NOT meant to be on computers this much! I can only imagine how much worse it is for children and families who do not have all the positive factors that my family does.

Please do not continue to delay the process of committing to a plan that allows students and their families the choice to return to school. Not everyone has to agree to go back, but everyone deserves to be given the choice if it is what is best for their students. I also believe that the metrics in place that determine what is felt to be safe are outdated...

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Emily Groves

Folger McKinsey E.S.

Parent of students in first and third grade

138. I am expressing my concern that there has been no in person learning at all this year. This has drastically affected my boys. My 8th grade son has an IEP (dyslectic). While he is doing ok with the virtual learning, I know he would be getting a much better education if he was in school so his teachers could meet his needs. My oldest son has Asperger's. He has been a straight A student for many years. Currently, he is failing. This failure is a reflection of how AACPS decided to not open for in-person learning. This has everything to do with how virtual learning is set up and no personal interaction. He is now suffering from depression from poor grades and the lack of social interaction from peers. Children must be allowed the opportunity to go back to school. Yes, I understand there is a virus and we are in a pandemic. However, there are many private schools in this area and public schools in surrounding states who have opened successfully. It is possible to bring these students back to school and to do it now. For families who wish not to go back, they can still do the virtual option. But also give families who wish to go back to school that choice too. Don't let the vaccine be a deciding factor for when to return. Re-evaluate your metrics, develop a plan for middle and high school students and get ALL students back in. Their grades, mental and emotional health depend on it. Make this a priority.

Sincerely,

Andrea Kopf

Chesapeake Cluster (CHS and CBMS)

139. Good evening,

As a parent of a George Fox Middle and Northeast High School student, I thank you for considering my testimony in your decision to return our children to school in person.

I 100 percent support the choice to return ALL our students, including middle and high schoolers, to IN PERSON school at the earliest date.

I am a frontline essential registered nurse who has worked with COVID patients since the beginning (and most likely before that time) and I have empathized with teachers and tried to understand their fear of returning. Back in March, my coworkers and I were scared to go to work with the little knowledge we

had then about this virus. We worked with limited PPE under modified and questionable guidelines from the CDC. We worked face to face with very sick, highly contagious patients without being able to social distance. And everyday we encounter patients who have slipped through our screening protocols and unintentionally are exposed. We have done and continue to do our jobs. We have always had a choice...work at the job that we never necessarily signed up for (daily exposure to a new contagious virus with many unknowns) or find a new job. I chose to take the risk and continue doing my job that I love and am passionate about. I am a nurse. This is more than a job...it is who I am, what I do. Teachers I have always thought were much the same.

I've always believed there were so many similarities between nurses and teachers and our passion for what we do...

Sincerely,

Michele Rowley, RN and AACPS parent

140. Let me start by saying, I am a former teacher, my husband, mother, sister, and father are teachers. This message is not written lightly. We need to get these kids back in school. My 2 children loved school, thrived in school. Now they have lost the spark. They cry each day when logging in and their anxiety is growing. The attitude of despair and depression is seeping in. Give us the option to send them back full time and let others with fear make the choice to stay home. Please don't let their fear make the choice for all of us.

Jody Buck

Mother to Riley (5th) and Ryan (4th) Buck

Severna Park Elementary

141. Dear Member of the Board and Dr. Arlotto,

I have four children in the Arundel cluster (K, 3, 5, and 8). Please follow the recommendations of the County Health Department and delay the reopening of schools until teachers have the opportunity to become vaccinated. Opening schools at these metrics would be reckless and dangerous to all involved. Community spread is so high at the moment that opening schools would only serve to make it nearly impossible to bring in under control in the near future. If you must bring some students back, please consider the DCPS model of only opening a select number of seats by invitation only, so those who need to be in school most are given the opportunity.

If this year's Kindergarteners don't learn to read until 1st grade, it won't be a disaster, and they won't remember or care. This year's Seniors won't have the traditional trappings of Senior year, but they will always have this story to tell. Academics can be recovered. The death of a close friend or family member cannot, and will stay with these kids forever.

Please follow the health metrics.

Thank you,

Naomi Ray-Dulany

142. Why are you even considering reopening schools? Positivity rates are triple what they were in November. A new more contagious strain is in our community. The number of young people getting the virus and requiring hospitalization is on the rise. Our hospitals are filling up. What part of this makes it seem like a good time to return to school?

Kids are less likely to contract the virus however people die from this and children are not exempt. Consider taking your child to the emergency room, handing them to a complete stranger and not having any communication with them for days to weeks while they fight for their life surrounded by complete strangers. Even more consider what that would be like for a young child, completely isolated from anyone they know deftly ill scared and no family to comfort their fears. If they survive, imagine the emotional scars they would carry the rest of their life.

Again I ask why are we considering taking a risk when we have a safe alternative? Are you or your child willing to be that one death? Are you prepared to live with the fact you facilitated a death that could have been avoided?

In November the community was split, the health experts and school superintendent recommended not reopening and the board ignored them all and voted to reopen. This time I hope you actually consider the facts presented before voting.

Charles Langhirt

Severna Park

Parent of school age child

143. Hello

I sent this message last month and will continue to send it until the Board understands that their highest priority should be to THE CHILDREN and getting them back into the classroom is paramount!

I work at AAMC as a nurse. We are not given a choice of how we want to work during this pandemic because WE AS ADULTS chose to work in a profession dedicated to public service. If teachers are unwilling to go back, they should be replaced with educational professionals that are willing to do the job that is expected of them.

previous message sent :

I wanted to write the board and express my family's strong desire to return students back into the classroom!!! (even if it's hybrid) The board should continue to make this the highest priority for the sake of our children's development, education and mental health.

Thank you

Michelle Ritter

Davidsonville, MD

144. Seth Wolak
Annapolis, MD
AACPS Teacher

I would like to discuss how it is not the appropriate time to consider reopening schools. In the past, the board has agreed to follow the science and that a case rate above 10 per 100,000 was too much of a risk. We still do not have vaccinations for teachers, and we are above 60 cases per 100,000 now. Governor Hogan also confirmed Maryland, more specifically our county, has the new variant of COVID-19. It is more important than ever we follow the science. I hear those who say the goal posts get moved on when to reopen and I strongly feel the only ones who should move the goalposts at all are those at the health department based on new information and vaccine distribution.

The health department has urged the board to consider the hospitalization rate. With the surge we are seeing, we need to follow the recommendation of waiting until after the predicted surge in ICU usage. I am not a medical professional and that is why I leave it to those who are to make these calls. The hybrid plan was voted on based on the metrics the health department provided. Let the health department evaluate those metrics and not ignore the recommendation they are providing you. Bringing some students back two days a week is not worth the risk during a surge in a global pandemic.

Thank you for taking the time to read my statement.

145. Dear Members,

I am the parent of a 9th grader at Glen Burnie High School. My son is also a student with an IEP in an ACC class. I am writing to implore you to take the following actions regarding reopening:

1. Follow Dr K's recommendations for delaying opening until it's safer to do so.
2. Develop a clear, and well thought out, plan for returning middle and high school students, and communicate some kind of timeline with families. The current "plan" is nothing more than a FAQ and falls far short. Please give these students and their teachers meaningful and thoughtful consideration.
3. Consider and communicate information regarding special education students. Unless they attend one of the three special centers, they seem to have been completely left out of the planning process. What about ACC students, co-taught students? What will reopening look like for them? Will they be able to remain with their IEP team and classmates if the full virtual option is chosen? We desperately need information in order to make an informed decision for our children with IEPs.
4. Do not lock families into a decision on the current survey until they have received the information needed to make an informed decision for their child(ren).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Michele Gallerizzo

146. Dear Board Members,

My husband teaches at Central Middle School. In light of the high COVID-19 case rates in the state and the even higher case rates in Anne Arundel County, I urge you delay the implementation of hybrid and in-person learning for the community at large until AACPS has run vaccination clinics for school staff.

Thank you,

Sandra Feldman

147. Dear Board Members,

I am writing to respectfully request that you reopen in-person learning (albeit a hybrid model) at AA Co. schools on February 2nd as currently proposed. By doing this you will enable parents to make the best decisions for the students. I understand that some families would prefer to remain virtual and I completely understand and support that decision. I also fully understand that some families would prefer to have their children back in school as soon as possible, so I implore the board to give that option to parents. This is not a debate about believing in science or listening to the "experts" as some members have unfortunately tried to frame it, it is a question of looking at multiple data points and making the best decision between sending your children to an in-person learning environment or keeping them virtual. Although I personally feel that the proposed in-person plan on the table is suboptimal, at least it is a choice, something that the board has deprived my family and many others of if we wanted to stay in the AA Co. public school system. Keeping schools closed to all is without merit, the county leadership have allowed casinos, gyms, and restaurants (after a lawsuit demonstrated they were not able to defend their rationale for trying to close) to open. I have trouble understanding how opening schools poses a greater risk than casinos.

At your last board meeting you stated how enrollment is down, people are actively speaking with their feet that they are not happy with the options and services you are providing...

Thanks,

Phil Wolf (Father of 3 Folger McKinsey Elementary School Students)

148. Normally, Board of Education decisions impact the wider community in the long term: educational policy shapes our youngest community members into responsible citizens.

This school year presents a unique moment wherein the board's decisions directly and immediately affect the health and lives of county residents. Dr. Kalyanaraman shared the dire circumstances Anne Arundel County faces and the data has only worsened since his last presentation. We are not in a position to open for hybrid learning. **Our case rate exceeds 60 cases per 100K residents, over 4 times the rate set by MSDE/MDH and AACo. guidance for in-person instruction.**

As Dr. Kalyanaraman shared, in-person instruction accelerates the spread of Covid-19, especially among school staff. Cases lead to hospitalizations and hospitalizations lead to deaths, especially if our healthcare system becomes further overwhelmed.

There should be no need for a vote this week: allow the health metrics to determine when it's safe to move into hybrid. No amount of public opinion or debate changes these metrics. I implore you to stick to the metrics and follow the advice of the experts. I implore you to have the courage to hold strong; show frustrated parents the empathy they deserve, but do not allow pandemic fatigue to shape policy when health and lives are on the line. Keep buildings closed just a little while longer to get our county past its winter peak and allow vaccinations for teachers to begin.

As leaders, you will never please everybody. But you can save lives.

Respectfully,

Eoin O'Neill
AACPS Employee
Davidsonville

149. Dear Board Of Education Members,

As the neighbor of many families with school aged children and the grandmother of a high school student, I am very concerned about the educational, social and general wellbeing of the children as well as the long-term effect of online schooling for such a long period of time, especially on younger children.

Many working parents of elementary school aged children have hired someone to be with their child/children to assist and supplement the online classes. Others were fortunate enough to enroll their children in private schools. THE PARENTS PAY OUT-OF-POCKET FOR BOTH OF THESE OPTIONSIN ADDITIONAL TO PAYING TAXES THAT SUPPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS. What about working parents that cannot afford either of those options? What is happening to those children?

Private schools and day care centers are operating safely, so why are the AACPS students STILL NOT ATTENDING IN-PERSON CLASSES?

It is time for the AACPS Board of Education to put the children of Anne Arundel County Public Schools FIRST!

GWYN M. TOBER, Arnold

150. When looking at our current education system, it is crucial to understanding why and how school actually came to be. We have to imagine a much different history. Prior to organized, in-class school, children spent their days in the fields or working in factories with their parents. With the enactment of child labor laws in the early 1900s, classrooms became the most popular place for children to spend their time, and a curriculum was formulated to produce top-notch factory workers. School was built on the cookie cutter foundation because our government wanted to produce robot-like workers for the industrial age.

Times have changed. Factory jobs are few, and jobs requiring innovation and adaptability are the jobs of today. Our world has evolved, but schools are still stuck in the old system meant for a society long behind us. The changes they have made have added to the problems of our stunted education system rather than helped bring more innovation and creativity.

Shouldn't we be asking how we can innovate our education system? Taking this time now to move our system forward is what we should be working toward during this time. We should not be discussing reopening buildings until our metrics are inline with the County Health Officer's recommendation, work instead to innovate our system to meet our students and push our county to have a world class educational system in spite of the global pandemic.

Thank you,

Shannon Meers-Gimon

Parent of Chesapeake Cluster Student

Wife of Chesapeake Cluster spouse

151. As a parent, I am writing in opposition to the opening of schools on the currently proposed timeline (2/2). I hope that the Board will continue to use the metrics and follow the advice of the County Health Officer.

I am also writing to you as a teacher, to discuss the proposed HYBRID plan, which has so many flaws and really needs to be re-evaluated before implementation.

Simultaneous teaching. AACPS has made statements that students in person will not be on ChromeBooks all day (FAQ: dated 1-5 regarding tech). This is just not possible. Parents are being led to believe that the students in-person will be taught as they have been in the past. How can a teacher have 10-12 students in person, and 10-12 remote and not have everyone on a device?

Inequity of learning/divided attention of the teacher. The attention given to in-person compared to remote can not possibly be equal. Therefore, students being taught the same lesson are not given equal attention/guidance.

Teacher Burnout. Teacher attention will be divided trying to serve two separate groups at one time. Time as a teacher will be dramatically less to work on developing curriculum presentations, grading and communication. This is a lot to ask of employees that are already stretched.

I hope the BOE will take into consideration the actual education of our students, in addition to their safety. Please question Dr. Arlotto and his Team on these important considerations regarding the hybrid plan. Demand that our in-person learning will be of value...

Kathy Milio

Annapolis Cluster Parent

Broadneck Cluster Employee

152. Dear Board of Education Members,

As a parent of three students at Annapolis High School, I am writing to express my deep concern about the education “survey” that parents have been asked to complete, which is really a binding contract. Would you sign a contract to buy a car or house without knowing the details? Of course not! So why is AACPS requiring parents to commit to an education plan for their children before knowing the details of the plan?

To make the best education choice for their children, parents need to know:

- The precise health metrics (case rates, percent positivity) that must be in place before schools open.
- The percentage of AACPS teachers and staff that can be vaccinated before schools open.
- The maximum number of classes that hybrid students will receive via virtual instruction—because it makes no sense to go back in the building if most classes are still being taught online!
- The maximum percentage of students who will be in a building on any given day.
- Details on AACPS plans to notify about COVID exposures and on the “return to school” policies for students and teachers who have been exposed, tested positive, or become ill.

I implore you to slow down this process, LISTEN to health experts, and provide parents with a thorough and detailed plan that will allow us to make an informed decision.

Sincerely,

Cara McCandless
Annapolis High School Parent
Annapolis, MD

153. Dear Board,

My name is Sarah Bernhardt and my child attends Hillsmere Elementary in Annapolis, MD. PLEASE INCLUDE MY TESTIMONY LOG FOR THE BOE MEETING ON 1/14/2021.

I am extremely worried about the long term effects virtual learning will have on our children. You have the power to FIX this, to make a difference in our children’s’ lives but I worry if more time passes the damage will be done for so many children. NOW is the time to advocate, Maryland is one of the few states not prioritizing education and I cannot sit back and allow this to happen! I urge you to vote to BRING OUR CHILDREN BACK NOW and while I am aware the hybrid plan isn't perfect, no plan is during these unprecedented times but we must start somewhere!

Thank you for taking the time to read my email, please do the right thing and allow the families who want their children back in the classroom on 2/2/2020.

Sarah Bernhardt

154. I am the parent of two AACPS children in the south river cluster, ages 5 and 8. I have removed my 3rd grade son from AACPS due to the struggles we experienced in the spring, I did not want to even attempt in the fall. I could tell it was going to be a disaster. Children need structure, they need face-to-face interaction and socialization with their peers. He was completely isolated and not motivated. If school does not reopen this spring I will also be removing my kindergartner who is currently doing virtual learning at Edgewater elementary. Her teacher is excellent but as professional organizations, pediatricians, and teachers have admitted online learning is completely inappropriate and not beneficial to students. I will not hesitate to remove both of my children from AACPS and put into private school. The frustration at the online learning situation is growing exponentially by the day. We see students in other states back to school full-time whose metrics are higher than ours. My son in private school is excelling and has 100% in person learning as well as all specials, art, PE, and language. This is not an impossible situation, with so many examples to follow, it is mind blowing how it is not happening. Get the kids back to school. The Board of Ed has given the teachers union too much control and we know the board of ed could open the schools if they want to. This situation has shown that the Board of Education does not place our students and their success first, it bends to the demands of the teachers union and does not stand up for our students... – Meagan Fleischer

155. My name is Katie Smollon and I have two children in elementary in the South River cluster. I'd like the Board to know that the impact of being out of the school building this long has been enormous - and not in a good way. My 2nd grader had to withdraw and start at a private school because he was so far behind and not learning anything despite his teacher's best efforts. Fortunately, we could make that change for him but many can't. My daughter in Kindergarten is also behind educationally, but more importantly, she is growing further and further behind socially. She doesn't want to do anything outside of our home as she has been without any school based socialization for almost a year. She needs WAY less time on a computer and the normalcy of what kindergarten is supposed to be like. Please consider all options and ideas to get kids back to school as soon as possible!

Thank you,

Katie and Frank Smollon

156. I am the parent of a 5th grader attending Broadneck Elementary School.

I have been actively following the updates, or lack thereof, for AACPS's safe return to school plan. I am a member of the online Facebook group PASS: Parental Alliance for Student Safety.

Instead of calling it a "survey," please indicate that it will be a commitment to continue virtual learning, or the hybrid option. The word survey does not clearly indicate that this is a final selection.

If you open now, when nearly every single metric is the worst it has been since this pandemic started, you will shatter trust. You will be demonstrating that you are *not* prioritizing student safety and many parents whose children most need something different than they are getting now will simply choose to keep their children home. **You will be left with in-person classrooms full of children whose families have had the privilege of trusting the system to care for them.** And many of the children you had most hoped to reach will be left at home. But, now they may have a teacher who will be struggling to meet the needs of kids in-person and virtually. There is *no one* who can tell us that the quality of

instruction will improve for the kids who are at home with a teacher having to teach both in-person and virtual students.

Please please please follow Dr. Kalyanaraman's recommendations. I fully expect those recommendations to change over time as vaccines are rolled out and we know more about this disease...

Thank you,

Lindsey Banks

parent of a 5th grader, Broadneck Elementary School

157. I am a Chief Petty Officer in the US Navy and serve as a leader in the Intelligence Community. The topic that dominates my work life, is COVID-19. I manage the impacts on the workforce to ensure that our operational mission continues to succeed in spite of the manpower challenges.

Look at the data, as Dr. Kalyanaraman states. The data shows COVID numbers are significantly higher today, than they were back in March 2020 when closed were initially moved to a virtual model.

Per CDC data over the last seven days, AA County has 415.2 (cases per 100k) which is up 22.89% from the previous seven days and a 10.38% positivity rate. New hospital COVID admissions are up 32.33%, percent of ICU Beds due to COVID is at 42.01% over that same time span.

The UK, which had not previously closed schools, finally did - due to the COVID rates. 609.5 cases per 100k over the last seven days. Ireland is at an alarming 905 cases.

I want my children to physically go back to school. But **NOT RIGHT NOW, NOT IN THIS ENVIRONMENT,** and most importantly, **NOT IN THE MANNER THAT THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE ALL THE COVID PRECAUTIONS.** It would be like a prison and detrimental to their health and development, any suggestions otherwise by board members prove how out of touch they are with what actually happens in the classroom.

Respectfully,

Aaron

Broadneck Cluster

Parent of four MRMS/CSCES students

158. Everyone is struggling through this pandemic, and we, like many others, want to return to the pre-COVID-19 educational model. Unfortunately, COVID-19 infection metrics in our area have dramatically worsened since the previous Board of Education (BOE) school reopening planning last fall. Despite 3 months since the October BOE led school reopening debacle where copious public feedback and concerns were provided critical information about reopening plans remain unanswered. The BOE has again rolled out a confusing series of statements with last minute plan changes, shifting survey timelines, short notice board meeting feedback sign up opportunities during business hours unsuitable to working families, and unclear communications on specific plans and efforts.

Ten months into the pandemic the BOE should be able to provide each parent, student and employee with a clear, concise 1 page narrative on how their school environment will operate, tailored to the grade and school they will attend.

Families are limited by the BOE to decide to send their children back immediately or spend the entire school year in virtual learning. Why is there no option to allow students to return to school later in the school year when they are able to obtain the vaccines and infection levels have decreased?

Virtual environment learning in middle and high school with no in room adult supervision is not an improvement on our current educational model.

Information on how clubs, lunches, busing, in school COVID-19 outbreaks response, adult oversight of students, and contact tracing will be conducted have not been provided.

Jason and Audrey Coy
Parents, CWES and Annapolis MS

159. Hello ,

I am reaching out today to implore the BOE to allow those parents and students the choice to return to in person schooling . We are failing our children , most especially our youngest ones who should be excited for school and shaping their love of learning . Instead my 6 year old cries , says she's bored , her eyes hurt from staring at the screen and she doesn't want to do "Computer school " . I see kids in the google classroom laying in beds, distracted , and many times left home with an older sibling who can't assist with technical issues .

Yes , Covid 19 is a very real threat , however it is not going anywhere and waiting for the hysteria to pass , or a vaccine to somehow eradicate all threat is naive . I ,like many other parents ,are considering pulling my daughter from AACPS for private school as many within our own state of MD have managed to remain open for in person learning without sweeping repercussions and deaths .

We can not continue to substitute teaching with a computer screen and power point slides and consider this an education.

We need to do better , please give us a choice and allow the children and parents who wish to not be in person to continue with their preferred option , as they are now .

Thank you for reading .
Genevieve Rowland
Crofton

160. As a parent of a sophomore attending Crofton High School, I will support hybrid learning ONLY under the condition that it has been deemed safe to do so.

My concern is always for the health and safety for our AACPS teachers, staff and students over anything else.

Thank you.
Valerie West
Crofton, MD

161. I do not think we should re-open schools at this time. Dr. Arlotto said he would not reopen until it was safe, and it clearly is not. I teach at a high school and there is no way that 3000 students, or even half, 1500, students under one roof are going to be safe. Our counts are higher than ever, and most schools do not have proper ventilation or areas to quarantine. I teach in a building that does not have walls. Also, how is admin going to enforce wearing masks if ultimately it is up to their parents?

After the counts come down, it might be ok to send elementary and small groups back, but I think we should tell parents and students NOW that all Middle and High Schools are virtual for the rest of the year. That way people can make arrangements well in advance.

Thanks,

Gina L. Champion

Annapolis Resident

Science Teacher

Old Mill High School

162. As a former AACPS teacher, tutor, and parent of a sophomore and senior who virtually attend Old Mill High School, I respectfully ask that you open schools to prevent further depreciation in our children's academic, social, and emotional development. Mr. Kalyanaraman should adjust the metrics he is suggesting AACPS follow as numerous research studies have shown that schools that are open are safer than restaurants, grocery stores, malls, etc. Our children cannot continue to be expected to learn virtually when thousands of other students across the nation in states where the metrics are higher are safely learning in classrooms and have been since August.

I have tutored many early elementary students since September and am very concerned as are their parents about the learning gap that continues to grow as virtual learning is not able to reach ALL students equitably. Despite the tremendous efforts of thousands of amazing AACPS teachers, the only way we can start to address this loss of learning is by giving parents and students a **choice** to continue learning virtually or to follow a hybrid learning model.

Maryland schools superintendent, Karen Salmon, stated in a recent Washington Post article, "We need to reopen our schools because the risks to our children of keeping them closed are far greater." If AACPS truly values all students, including those who are struggling academically, socially and emotionally, the board will give students and parents the right to choose what's best for them and reopen schools before it's too late.

Thank you for your time,
Jocelyn Blatzheim
Old Mill Cluster

163. Dear Board of Education,

Please include in the testimony log for the BOE meeting 1/14/2021.

I read and agree with this op-ed

(<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.capitalgazette.com%2Fopinion%2Ffour-say%2Fface-our-say-2021107-20210112-3ywcy7j5sze6lb3fmwbpemdghi-story.html&data=04%7C01%7Cboardoffice%40aacps.org%7Cf64763a9e13146d488f908d8b7d9aa4f%7Cb7d27e93356b4ad88a7089c35df207c0%7C0%7C0%7C637461492780360677%7CUnknown%7CTWFBpGZsb3d8eyJWljoimC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiv2luMzliLCJBTiI6lk1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&am;:sdata=8YUn8PmKXAObwxEOVFintxzAbDjU41oAXv%2B6ULVYW2g%3D&reserved=0>) which is why I was so flabbergasted that I even received a message about returning to hybrid learning. We have been either at or above 80% capacity at a large teaching hospital where I am employed in Baltimore. It is only that low because we moved our chest pain unit to house inpatients and we closed half of my unit for Covid negative inpatients waiting on beds to help decompress the emergency room. It's insane how full we are, and this is happening nationwide; worse in other areas.

The safety of the community, the children, and the school employees must come first.

It would be irresponsible on so many levels to even consider hybrid at this point. I'm a full time working single mom and I want my daughter back in school , but now is not the time.

Sincerely,

6th grade parent
Annapolis Middle School

Janet Neves, MBA, RN, CEN

164. Thank you for taking the time to read my message to the Board.

I received the survey and personally feel like the survey was a way for the board to say "they asked the parents" but the survey did not address a single detailed question. Would I like my child to ride in a school bus, sure, but what are YOU doing on the school bus to keep my kids safe. Without a plan provided to us, how can we provide answers to your questions? It makes no sense. Would I like my child to do hybrid? Yes. Would like I like my child to do hybrid while the Covid numbers are exponentially through the roof? No. So which choice in the survey should I choose? Were we asked what we felt were safe Covid outbreak numbers? No. Were we asked questions about adding vaccination to the equation? No. As a parent. I would be ok with returning to school if my adult family members and teachers at the school are vaccinated, knowing that children cannot receive the vaccine. But that question wasn't asked. And the survey really didn't want much of a true opinion to the various scenarios we are facing. I appreciate the survey including the question about staying with their current teacher. Surveys are useless though, when we are asked questions but not provided information.

Thank you, Amanda Baker - Rippling Woods Elementary School

Amanda Baker

165. I am really disappointed in the plans for how to conduct school in the hybrid model for kindergarten. I'm choosing to stay hybrid because I don't think it's emotionally healthy for students to go back in and be isolated and still work off a computer. I'm not comfortable with the volunteers coming in during lunch break, are you going to test them every week? Are you doing background checks? If the teacher can't approach the child, what if a kid has an accident in the bathroom, or can't get their pc to work? This plan isn't in the best interest of young students and there needs to be a separate plan put together for them. Can you provide more information on what this plan is actually going to look like, with scenario examples as stated above.

Thanks,
Kelly Leizear

Crofton Woods Elementary School

Kindergarten

166. I am a parent of two elementary students (grades 1 & 3) in Anne Arundel County's Crofton cluster. While the closing of in-person schooling due to COVID has been incredibly challenging for my students individually and for our family overall, I would still ask that you follow the recommendations of our health officials regarding school reopening. I recognize how challenging it is to navigate governance given the public opinion debate surrounding COVID, but it is first and foremost a public health issue and the experts in that field should be the ones guiding decision making.

Thank you,
Jessica Wilson

167. Dear Members of the Board, Dr Arlotto, et al,

No one expected 302 days ago that our schools would still be closed. No one expected COVID would have killed 6196 people in Maryland, made 312K sick, or infected over 2 million US children. No one expected our rates today would be higher than ever or that a new, easier-to-spread variant would be spreading in AACO. But here we are. And just like throughout this entire unprecedented event in our lives, it is the experts who we turn to. As the Board of Ed, you have been elected to represent us, but you are not the experts. Dr. Kalyanaraman and staff are the health experts. Dr Arlotto and staff are the education experts. Your job is to listen to their guidance and, regardless of your personal opinion, follow it. We all want to be back in school. None of us see this as an extended vacation. But this is a global pandemic with life-or-death consequences. Fear has often been discussed and dismissed. I ask you: why is fear of education loss more important than fear of death or disability, of our students, whose parents have a choice, or of our teachers who, let's be honest, don't? Education loss can be remedied. Death and disability cannot. If you choose to go against the recommendations of Dr. Arlotto and Dr. Kalyanaraman, I ask you: Do you think you have more expertise to make the decision than they do? And if so, you owe it to all of us to explain why. And to know that we will hold you responsible for the outcome...

Sincerely,
Jessica Pachler

Mom of 2 Eastport Elementary Students and 2 Annapolis Middle School Students

Eastport Elementary School PTA President

Annapolis Middle School PTA President

Ward 8 Representative Annapolis Education Commission

168. Please vote to bring students back to school. I am not writing only on behalf of my own children, but for all the students who want to return to school. It has been very frustrating and stressful for families to endure this lengthy virtual experience and there is now sufficient and substantial evidence to show that in school learning can be done in a safe manner. Given that many schools world-wide have found ways to safely return their kids to classrooms, even during times of increased case rates, it seems there should be plenty of information including best practices and lessons learned to assist our county in reopening in a safe and efficient manner.

I have reached out to family and friends to ask about their experiences since many of them have children in public school systems who are back in the classroom. One of the families recently sent me a link to data which shows that very little (if any) transmission of the virus takes place in their schools and their students recently increased the number of days in the building to four days per week! Prior to that, students were in the classroom two days per week. Here is a link to the data for your reference: <https://www.ms.k12.il.us/covid-dashboard>

We have been told case rates are too high. We have been told that teachers are not willing to go back, or are being encouraged by their union to resist going back. Please look for solutions. Maybe each school should be allowed to make decisions on in person learning based on agreed upon guidelines...

Thank you,

Mindy Hooker

Parent of Central Middle and South River High School students

District 7

169. Good morning,

My name is Lauren Cross and I have a K and 2nd grader at Edgewater Elementary school. I am writing to express the concerns that I have with virtual learning. Having a 5yr and 7yr old glued to a computer screen 18+ hours a week is detrimental to their mental health and well being. There are often tears, breakdowns, and falling asleep out of boredom and disinterest. My two students who once loved school now wake up every day crying that they "hate" school. The tears continue throughout each day. Frustration, anxiety and stress continues over and over each week that you delay a return in-person. This is sorely unfair to our children. A child should not know anxiety and stress. But it is becoming more familiar to these kids who are unable to process or cope with these feelings. I've reached out to an AACPS school counselor and expressed my concerns/pleaded for help...and once again was failed. I am quickly losing faith in AACPS and have already applied to private school for next year. Aside from the

social, emotional and mental impacts on our children, private school tuition will be a hardship for our family financially. However we will not return to AACPS without FULL in-person school. Many other regions, as well as local private schools, have successfully returned to in-person learning. Why is it so hard for AACPS to figure it out when these smaller schools and other regions are able to?

Thanks for considering.

170. I am a parent of two AACPS students in the Old Mill cluster. I have been impressed with AACPS' virtual learning program. I understand that returning to in-person learning is complicated with many subsets of stakeholders to consider. BOE members are focusing on reopening schools to everyone in an equally limited way as soon as possible. Trying to please everyone will serve no one.

To accommodate social distancing, in-person classes must remain small, so the current hybrid plan was developed, but in-person two days a week and virtual three days a week is inadequate and nonsensical. It's like ordering an eight-slice pepperoni pizza and only three slices have toppings. For students struggling with virtual learning, 40% in-person isn't enough. Parents working out-of-home still need consistent child care for 60% of the week. Many teachers' workloads would double.

In-person classes should be M-F for students with demonstrated need. Everyone who can, should remain virtual. "Demonstrated need" is nebulous, as it encompasses academic, socioemotional, safety, and financial needs. But for BOE members who hold up disadvantaged kids as the primary driver for reopening schools before community spread is under control, I ask you this: Why can't we get the kids in dangerous home environments, kids who physically can't learn from a screen, kids who are trying their best and losing ground currently back in school M-F? You say you don't want to single out/embarrass them. Failing to support them adequately is worse.

#Wear a mask.

Jenelle Kiernan
Severn, MD

171. Dear Dr. Arlotto and AACPS Board Members,

I'm writing as a parent of a high school student at AACPS and as an employee: please do not make the hasty decision of reopening schools until the case rate has decreased and remained consistently decreased to a level deemed safe, per our MD Department of Health. It wasn't safe to consider reopening when the case rate was just above 10 in November and currently with the case rate over 63 as of today, it is, without question, beyond unsafe to do so now.

We are still in a state of emergency in MD. Case rates have risen significantly. Hospitalizations due to COVID are at an all-time high. The governor and our county executive have urged the public not to gather with people who do not live within their household. Businesses have been ordered to scale back to 25% of their capacity. There is a reason for this and that is to keep people safe! What part of any of that data suggests it would be a good idea to even consider having hundreds (and over) of people gather for 6+ hours in buildings without proper ventilation, with an unimproved hybrid plan, while the Board convenes virtually, for the reason as stated on the AACPS website, "Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic"?

Please follow the health metrics set forth by the MD DOH and the advice of Dr Kalyanaraman. Please be consistent. Keep the students virtual.

Thank you,

Deanna Ortiz
Severna Park, MD

172. Dear Dr. Arlotto and members of the Board of Education,

At your last meeting, our County Health Officer gave a very detailed presentation on the serious state of the pandemic here in our county and provided careful recommendations on how AACPS should proceed. Instead of heeding this guidance, two board members immediately made a point of announcing that the power to re-open lies with them and they are not required to follow any recommendations. There was also discussion about bringing students back at all levels of school simultaneously, which also flies in the face of the guidance they have received.

I don't expect members of the board to be infectious disease specialists. I don't expect you to be on the phone every day consulting with Johns Hopkins or other experts in the field. But **I do expect you to listen when experts speak.**

If you feel free to disregard expert health and safety guidance, how can I as a parent have any faith that you will ensure my children's health and safety inside your school buildings?

Our schools do not exist in a vacuum. Taking any action which may in any way contribute to worsening conditions in our community as a whole will have serious repercussions for all county residents, whether parents choose hybrid or virtual, whether they have children or not. **It is morally reprehensible for the board to ignore the potential public health impact.**

As a parent and a taxpayer, **I urge you to follow the health department guidance regarding reopening,** as you clearly state on your website.

Sincerely,

Laura Booth
Annapolis, MD
Parent of 2 AACPS students

Annapolis High School PTSA Treasurer

Annapolis Education Commission, Ward 7 representative

173. Dear School Board,

Hi. My name is Natalie Wolf and I am in the 5th grade at Folger McKinsey Elementary School. I am writing to ask you to open the schools. Even though this format is much better than what we were doing in the spring, I still miss going to school. Almost everything has opened, but not our schools. I am going to dance class wearing a mask and we were able to play sports this fall. This is my last year in elementary school, and I would like to at least go to school for the end of the year. I also have two brothers in elementary school. One is in Kindergarten and he has only met three kids in his class! The older students already have friendships, but kindergartners have to make friends over a computer screen. Also, there are some opportunities that we are missing out on because we are learning online. The talent show and the school play were both virtual this year. Also, our parents are still working. They have to stay home and help us out with technology issues instead of working. This doesn't seem fair. Please open our schools! Stay safe!

From, Natalie Wolf (5th grader at Folger)

174. I am a parent of two children in the aacps system and a pediatric nurse at a prominent children's hospital. I am shocked with the numbers and cases as they are now that going to hybrid learning is even being considered. It would be irresponsible to place the teachers, staff and children at such high risk. Yes, I do know that children are not shown to be the highest vectors of the virus, nor do they tend to get as sick as adults, but they do get sick and there are plenty of studies that show the long term effects of the virus on children could be life long, even on children who have been infected but show no symptoms. Not to mention the amount of people who have been staying home would now need to be out and about increasing risk of community spread.

Not only is this not appropriate to consider with the metrics as they are, asking parents to consider it with the metrics and with no information on how any of it would be conducted, is ridiculous. I want my children back in school as much as the next parent, but not when it puts them or the school staff at such risk.

Sincerely,

Kara Freeman RN, BSN, CPN

Parent of children at Monarch Academy Annapolis

175. To Mr. Arlotto and members of the Board of Education,

Regarding the reopening plan for the 2020-2021 school year, I have concerns as the new virus variant enters Maryland. The new variant of the COVID virus is more contagious and there still isn't proper safety precautions in place for schools to protect our children from the virus.

My daughter is a senior at AHS and is in the PVA program. The issue we have is if she decides to stay all Virtual or Hybrid, she may lose some of her teachers. At this point in the school year, she (or any student) cannot afford to be assigned a teacher that she does not know or who doesn't know her. This goes for any student but especially a HS senior in a Magnet program. If we choose hybrid then she is in a school that will have at least half of the student body (approx. 1100 students) at one time in an enclosed building during the winter months, without proper air circulation, especially when the Governor states that gatherings cannot be more than 10 people. And there is no way there will only be 10 students in a classroom for HS students. And what are the safety plans for our children, especially HS students, who change classes? There are too many students in a HS to make sure our children will NOT

get the virus, especially with new variant, if returned to school. Schools are SUPERSPREADERS!!! Until everyone can be vaccinated, teachers and students, school should remain virtual.

Thank you,

Colleen Huff

Annapolis, MD

176. Dear Dr. Arlotto and Members of the Board of Education,
I am writing in opposition to reopening school buildings at the start of the second semester. The plan as currently posted is not much different than in October with an increased risk of exposing students and teachers to health dangers, will widen the inequity gap, and still has inconsistency and noncompliance of policy and laws.

As outlined in more detail below, AACPS should not consider reopening schools at this time because:

1. **The positive case rate continues to rise in our county**
2. **AACPS does not have effective safety guidelines in place**
3. **AACPS continues to provide misleading information on a binding contract**
4. **The plan does not address the needs of ALL students and cause inequities**
5. **The reopening plan is not being effectively communicated to all families**

1 **The positive case rate continues to rise in our county**

It's really simple. **The positive case rate in our county is breaking records every week and continues to increase.** The new variant of COVID that has a more rapid spread was detected in our county this week. Yes vaccines are starting to be provided to our essential workers but until we see a consistent decrease in positive case rates, to a level that is considered safe by the health professionals we should not be deciding on a reopening date. We have no idea what the effects of the vaccine will be, or when our AACPS staff (not just teachers) will have both required doses, and so adhere to the health department when saying wait to ASSESS the situation in March – not now...

Warmest regards,

India Ochs

Concerned Parent, Alum, and Hillsmere Elementary School Advocacy Chair

177. Hello members of the Board of Education. My name is Matthew Fass and I am a junior at South River High School.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you to give a students' perspective of virtual learning.

Being this is my junior year, I have begun my research for college. Last year, when choosing my classes for my schedule, I knew it would be critical to take a very challenging course load to help my chances for college selections.

Little did I anticipate that virtual learning was going to make this a poor decision. The lack of a 1 to 1 relationship with my teachers has significantly affected my learning, because taking AP and Honors

classes virtually is seeming to be very difficult for me. My teachers are doing an incredible job under the circumstances, but this style of learning is not allowing me to excel and will ultimately affect my future higher learning opportunities.

Let me be as clear as I can...I want to be back in school! So do most of my friends. The emotional toll that virtual learning has taken on us is damaging our futures!

I read a report that said 'If remote learning continues into 2021, students will suffer an average of 7 months of learning loss. I don't even have 7 months left in my junior year, and lower income students will suffer even more than me.

I am 16 years old and am about to get my driver's license. If I am responsible enough to drive a car, then don't you think I am responsible enough to wear a mask and stay socially distanced?

I have respect for all those that want to remain learning virtually, but I want my choice...

178. Hello,

My name is Karen Boyle and I live in the Severna Park cluster.

Children all over the county are suffering. Students are failing classes at records highs, there are waiting lists at local counseling centers for children suffering from depression and the level of stress and anxiety among students is increasing daily. It has been more than 10 months since my 8th, 10th and 12th graders have seen the inside of a classroom and they are struggling. In fact, my 10th grader was up at 3:30 this morning with terrible stomach cramps which have been attributed to school stress. She was up late working on homework because the new schedule does not have enough time built in to teach herself and finish the work, which is clearly taking a toll on her mentally and physically. As a parent, I can only do so much to help her. The school board has the ultimate power to fix this situation for my daughter and for students all over the county. As a healthcare worker I see how the precautions we take on a daily basis are working to protect us and our patients from exposure. If you look at the data from other states you will see there are not huge outbreaks associated with kids being in the classroom. In fact, you might find that school is one of the safest places to be.

Please open schools. Our children are counting on you to be their advocates!

Thank you.

179. **Please include this in the testimony log for the BOE Meeting 1/14/2021.** I respectfully write this email to request the BOE delay the hybrid plan. Our county is seeing a devastating rise in numbers of cases and hospitalizations, as you undoubtedly know. Returning to the classrooms now or in the near future puts our teachers, students, and their families at risk. Pushing forward with the hybrid plan is also unlikely to benefit most students, as teachers would be required to split attention between students in their classrooms and those at home, as opposed to the focused attention they are receiving virtually. Furthermore, the disruption and negative mental health impacts of students switching teachers at this point in the school year is enough reason to delay hybrid until it is safe to bring all students back in this manner, not just those willing to take risks. Parents have also been asked to make decisions about the remainder of the school year while metrics do not support returning, with no timeline and details provided, and no real understanding of the "plan" to return. Teachers have not been vaccinated yet and most families will not have that opportunity for some time. All of the

information available has us perplexed as to why the BOE is even considering hybrid learning at this time. Please delay consideration of this plan, as well as the expectation of families to make a choice, until a safer and more logical time presents itself.

Sincerely,

Debra L. Malfi, Ph.D.

Cape St. Claire/Cape St. Claire Elementary School

180. Dear Board of Education,

I am writing as a mother of a 3rd, 4th, and 6th grader who is confused and scared at the lack of urgency and progress with getting our kids back in school 5 days a week.

We in Anne Arundel County have watched as private schools did the "impossible" and opened in September and have stayed open. We've watched as other countries, states, counties, and jurisdictions have prioritized children and gotten them in school. We've watched NYC put 300,000 kids out of 1.1 million children back in school. There is no school system that has a greater challenge than NYC. We trusted that you were working to get kids in school and yet here we are still filling out surveys and fighting for in person learning.

Anne Arundel County has continuously worked against our children. Dr. Anthony Fauci told ABC's "This Week" that in-person classes should be "the default position." The spread of COVID-19 "among children and from children is not really very big at all, not like one would have suspected." I constantly hear him make this point.

If you were following case rate as your ONLY metric and not listening to any other science, then why weren't kids back in school in August/September? Based on these numbers, how will you ever get High schoolers back in? Case rate of 5 per 100,000? We weren't even there after a national lockdown. You are setting us up to fail based on these numbers alone. <https://aahealth.org/daily-covid-19-data/>

However, due to your lack of ingenuity and not being on the forefront of getting kids in school, you now have the luxury to see how all of the private schools and school systems are faring that have done the "impossible"...

Nicole Doss

Millersville, MD

Shipley's Choice ES and Severna Park MS

181. I am the parent of 2 high school students at Chesapeake High School. My daughter is a Senior and my son is a Sophomore. I believe wholeheartedly that my kids as well as all students, should have the chance to return to in person learning in the school building as soon as possible. This has gone on long enough and the ones who are paying the price are our children.

Day in and day out I ask my kids how their school day was and did they learn anything? Most days the answer is very mundane and they tell me they did not learn anything. Not to say they aren't learning anything at all, they just aren't learning all that they could be in person. My kids grades show that they

are doing fine, because they turn in all required work, however their attitudes when it comes to school tell me something different. My kids both have AP classes and my daughter has had them before. She said that she knows she isn't learning everything she is supposed to be and she is very worried about the AP Exams at the end of the year because of this.

This is the first time my son has taken AP classes so he has nothing to compare to. My issue when it comes to my son is the amount of downtime he seems to have. Mainly when there is free time to get any extra help and the long break they have for lunch...

Thank you for your time,

Melanie Harris

182. Virtual school is failing to meet the needs of many students and causing harm as well. Today my 7th grader tried to take a Math Assessment- our internet went down. Now he doesn't know if it was submitted, if all the work was saved and he doesn't know his options to take it again because of the internet issues. He is upset - crying - stressed out. This is one example of the toll of virtual school. He is also a gifted and talented identified student who is bored out of his mind and cries after school multiple times a week.

My 9th grader. Is struggling on assessments and one of his teachers told me yesterday in email, that he is likely the type of student who needs paper assessments in front of him to do his best. The principal of our school advised parents to pick classes carefully because students have not adequately been prepared academically this year for next. He has trouble sleeping. And is anxious.

Virtual School is a failure. It's causing harm. The kids must be given the choice to return to school - as soon as possible - not when teachers have been vaccinated. Everyone else is working IN PERSON without vaccinations. It's time.

Shannon Leadbetter

Crofton Middle and High

183. Testimony from: Erica J. Chandler, Parent and non-AACPS School Psychologist, Crofton Woods ES January 14, 2021 Board of Education Meeting

As of January 12, 2021, the leader of our state, Governor Hogan, informed us that 2 cases of the UK variant, which is *more* contagious, has been identified. He also stated that case rates *and* hospitalizations continue to RISE, especially in ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY.

I am not a health expert, nor are you, therefore your dismissal of the advice of local health officials is alarming. I ask myself often, why is this so difficult? Why are we still playing this ping pong match? This is not an "open" or "stay closed" debate. This is about listening to the *experts* about reopening SAFELY! Why is that being missed? We're all *so* tired of this pandemic and we want it behind us but we don't get to dictate that. Our county does NOT have a handle on this pandemic. Our case rates are RISING not falling. I desperately want my child back in school but I want her, and the staff, to go back **SAFELY when our health officials indicate it is a better time to do so.**

It's simply unacceptable to ignore guidance from our local health officials. It is based on data and expertise that only *they* hold. They also shared that 'the when' may change and the metric could be

adjusted as things continue to evolve. The data drives the decision and the experts have said NOW is NOT the time.

Your job right now is simple. Listen to our *health* officials during this global *health* crisis.

184. Hello,

I'm not sure if this is the place or platform in which to share personal experience, but I figure I will share in case there are others in a similar situation. My name is Ashley Nicholson. My son, Alexander, is a fifth grader at Windsor Farm Elementary. To say this year has been a struggle is an understatement. Alex is very bright and has been on the Dean's list throughout his entire elementary school experience, until this year. In fact, at the beginning of the school year, we received a letter regarding a magnet school opportunity. However, Alex has become so unmotivated and disinterested that he didn't even give the offer a second glance. I have watched his demeanor and attitude towards school go down rapidly in the first marking period. Along with those behavioral changes, we are seeing him slide dramatically academically. He no longer sees how the curriculum is relevant and has just decided to hardly apply himself. He even got so frustrated that he vented to his music teacher. She was very hurt to know he was so angry and unhappy because she has been his music teacher since kindergarten and he has always been a good student, so she had no idea he was feeling so defeated. I of course talked to him about how unacceptable it was to reach out to a teacher to vent frustration and I had him apologize to the teacher for that. However, what he said wasn't wrong, it's just the way he said it that could have been more tactful and should have been said to someone that may have some control over the e-learning curriculum and process...

Sincerely,

Ashley Nicholson, Broadneck

185. It is time for education employees to return to schools and allow students to resume in-person learning. I acknowledge the seriousness of the pandemic; however, everyone needs to do their part. We all have risk to bear: parents, families, working adults, children, and childcare workers have been doing their part for ten months, sharing the daily risks of COVID-19. The time has come to include education employees.

My 10th grader is an honor student, two sport athlete and has ADHD. School was a struggle until 9th grade – he hit his stride and loved school. With no sports, face-to-face interaction with his great teachers and his peers, he has reverted to his old mindset. My 8th grade straight A student/social butterfly loved school and jumped out of bed now finds every excuse to stay in bed, every loophole to skip class and has become a hermit. My kids are not the same people they were 10 months ago – it's terrifying.

I implore you to use a common-sense approach based on public health guidelines and other metrics affecting our children (mental/emotional/social well-being), not vaccinations. There is no timetable for school staff vaccinations – we cannot wait to begin in-person learning.

Our children need the complete education structure they receive in the public school setting. Following the examples of workplaces everywhere that rapidly adapted to public health guidelines, AACPS needs to resume operations. Public schools throughout the country have successfully reopened schools, even

at the height of the pandemic. We need a plan and a timetable now for return to in-person learning for ALL grade levels...

Respectfully,

Nikki Rogers

Severna Park Cluster (SPMS and SPHS)

186. To all BOE members,

I am the parent of a current third grader.

PLEASE follow the metrics put forth by the health department and Dr. K.

There is not one single parent who does not want their child back in school. That being said, I firmly believe the Board needs to follow the health metric guidelines put forth by the state and Dr. K. To do otherwise is reckless. A year of learning can be replaced, but human lives cannot.

Thank you for your time.

Corry Yeouroukis, DVM, MS, DACVP (Clinical)

Severna Park

187. Members of the Board,

I will keep this short. Please follow the recommendations/guidance of Dr. Kalyanaraman and Dr. Arlotto as they pertain to the reopening of schools. To do otherwise would be reckless.

Sincerely,

Sarah Seiler

District 30 Resident

Instructional Design and Training Specialist

Mother of an AACPS 1st grader

PTO Executive Board Member

188. Members of the board,

Our children need to go back to school. They need the social interaction and adult guidance in order to perform at their best. They are falling behind and need to work extra hard to maintain passing grades. Furthermore, their mental health is a concern. I have seen more frustration outbursts and apathetic behavior this year than ever before. However, you have the opportunity to correct the issue. I feel there is a solution that would be acceptable for those who wish to return as well as those who don't. In my opinion, a Hybrid option is the best solution. Kids can do 2-week rotations in the classroom and from home, allowing for quarantine and observance time. I will continue this by staying brief but there have been several studies done that show kids aren't the spreaders, don't contract the virus as easily, have increased immunity and lower response to symptoms due to the MMRII vaccine given to them and the higher level of melatonin in their systems. Moreover, preteen and teen suicide rates and substance abuse are on the rise. So, please, I implore you to return them to the

classroom. Forego buying more Chromebooks and buy PPE for the teachers. Cited below are the articles I was paraphrasing and referencing in this statement.

Sincerely,
Jason A. Clark
Pasadena

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/2020/12/we-now-know-how-much-children-spread-coronavirus/#close>

189. I urge the board to consider the health, safety, and well-being of everyone in our county as you discuss in-person instruction in Anne Arundel County Public Schools. It is well-established that by increasing in-person contact and the mobility in a community, we are also providing more opportunities for COVID-19 to spread. Our trajectories of both the case rate and positivity rate are both going up; opening up schools will increase mobility in our county, leading to more transmission, serious illness, and death. This is not an abstract threat; already almost 400 Anne Arundel County residents have died and this number is projected to grow.

Emily Van Essen, Arnold

Anne Arundel County Resident

AACPS Employee

190. Members of the Board of Education:

I appreciate you taking the time to read this letter. I have never written to the Board before, however I felt compelled to write the facts at this critical time.

My sister, a nurse practitioner in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago has witnessed firsthand the effects of COVID-19 on children. Although we do not often hear about pediatric COVID cases in the news, since COVID began over 2000 kids tested positive at Lurie Children's with over 15% requiring hospitalization. Kids ARE getting sick.

Additionally, she has also cared for children not directly affected with the disease, but children who are in organ failure from COVID related Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C). Many of these children were never diagnosed with COVID-19 in the acute period and were found to be antibody positive when presented with MIS-C. These children have required ventilators, dialysis, and ECMO (heart and lung bypass) to survive. Hearing her speak of these children who are on machines to be kept alive makes it clear that we CAN NOT gamble with our children's lives.

With the current case rate at 63.4, it would be negligent and unethical for AACPS to return to in-person classes, especially before teachers are vaccinated. The thought that I could unknowingly affect a child with COVID and cause this degree of illness is unconscionable. We must think of the safety of the children first.

Sincerely,

Jamie Grimason, Severna Park

AACPS Teacher

191. I am the Mom of 4 children in AACo public schools. I am 100% for children going back to school now! I do understand that teachers need to be vaccinated (which hopefully happens soon). But with the vaccinations, the metrics for going back to school need to change. Students should be able to go back to school at 30/100,000 once teachers are vaccinated. A plan is already in place and those families that would like to wait for all peoples to be vaccinated or until metrics are lower can stay virtual. So many children need to be in person NOW! Our 6th grader we had to pull and put in private school (which by the way, that school goes 5xweek and has had zero issues with Covid19 this school year). She had stopped logging onto school and became depressed and would not leave her room. We were scared and desperate! Our other 3 kids (10th, 8th and 4th grade) are hanging on by a thread. It is a constant fight to even log onto school. There are tears every day and a general low grade depression over all my kids The repercussions of keeping these kids out of school goes WELL beyond the disease itself. My 10th grader tells me stories of kids who are giving up on school and, without sports as well, are now into dangerous things. These are GOOD kids from GOOD homes that were on a strong forward path until now. Please something has to be done...I beg of you! Get the teachers vaccinated and open back up per the plan developed this fall.

Thank you,

Nicole Jeffers
Severna Park school district