

16 November 2020

Dr. Vincent Matthews
Superintendent, San Francisco Unified School District

Dawn Kamalanathan
Chief Facilities Officer, San Francisco Unified School District

Mele Lau-Smith
Executive Director, Office of Community Schools & Family Partnerships, San Francisco Unified School District

Gentle Blythe
Deputy Superintendent, Strategic Partnerships & Communication, San Francisco Unified School District

RE: SAFE AND TIMELY REOPENING OF SCHOOLS CLOSED DUE TO COVID-19

Dear San Francisco Unified School District Leaders:

We are writing on behalf of the physician leadership and more than 3000 physician members of The San Francisco Marin Medical Society (SFMMS). We are so grateful for the hard work of the San Francisco Unified School District to safely reopen some of our San Francisco schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We firmly believe that this incremental approach with a focus on safety and equity and guided by data and science will demonstrate success and help us understand how to keep all San Francisco children and families healthy during this epidemic.

With the conclusion of San Francisco County Elections, I am taking this opportunity to reaffirm our enthusiasm to work with you to reopen schools in a safe and timely manner. The Society shares your concerns: keeping children, teachers, staff, and our communities safe and striving toward equity. The risks of keeping children away from school are substantial. Damage is already being done and is disproportionately impacting communities of color. The 'upstream' influence of early childhood education on the 'downstream' health and wellbeing of adults is well-established in evidence. Our physicians are seeing dramatically increased mental health issues leading to disability and hospitalizations; increased food insecurity; decreased physical activity leading to obesity, eating disorders; and abuse and neglect, among other health and wellness concerns. We must act now to safeguard the health and wellbeing of our communities by reopening public schools. In-person school is an essential service for our children.

We encourage you to think of SFMMS as a resource. We have firsthand experience as we have safely reopened our practices to patients for the past six months. SFMMS has developed [*Principles for the Reopening of In-Person Schools Closed Due to COVID-19*](#), and several of our physician members have been involved in advising schools on the engineering controls and investments necessary to safely reopen. Our physicians are available for technical guidance, and to keep decision-makers and leaders apprised of the best evidence on how to re-open without increasing the spread of COVID-19. Our members are also available to partner with individual schools and/or school leadership as advisors during the re-opening process.

We would like to schedule a meeting to discuss these and other ways that we might assist with this vital process of reopening schools. Conrad Amenta, Executive Director of SFMMS (camenta@sfmms.org), can assist in finding a time and including appropriate physician representation.

Thank you for your careful and evidence-based care of San Francisco's community in its entirety, including those who cannot speak as loudly for themselves, including our children.

Sincerely,



Brian Grady, M.D.
President, San Francisco Marin Medical Society



Monique Schaulis, M.D.
President Elect, San Francisco Marin Medical Society



Kim Newell-Green, M.D.
Past President, San Francisco Marin Medical Society



Shannon Udovic-Constant, M.D.
Past President, San Francisco Marin Medical Society
Chair, California Medical Association Board of Trustees

CC: Director Dr. Tomas Aragon
Director Dr. Grant Colfax