



For Immediate Release:

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Connecticut's Students, their Families and Educators Need a Lifeline, Not an Anchor

Today Connecticut Education Association (CEA) President Jeff Leake and AFT Connecticut President Jan Hochadel released the following joint statement regarding the state education department's plan for reopening school buildings:

“We intend to fully analyze the 50-page document released late this afternoon; at first glance it appears incomplete at best. We have yet to find any reference to empowering local or regional districts with the resources clearly needed to implement the sort of in-person learning plan outlined.

“Instead it appears to pass the proverbial ‘buck’ for reopening buildings to local school superintendents and board members who already face difficult budgetary choices. It’s incomprehensible for state officials to pursue such an approach on the same day they released survey results finding deep disparities for Connecticut’s highest-need districts during distance learning.

“The lack of equity in this guideline is astounding. The reality is that some districts have adequate resources for the kind of plan outlined here; those in high-need communities do not. Parents in many of these communities lack access to paid leave and this plan would force them to make an impossible choice. They should not have to consider sending sick children to school during a global pandemic that health experts have said will still be with us in the fall.

“Further, nowhere in the guidelines do we see a plan for recruiting and deploying social workers or school counselors to deal with family, health and trauma issues experienced during this crisis.

“While the guidelines call for following CDC (Centers for Disease Control) protocols in some areas, they fall far short in many others. The plan suggests social distancing between student workstations and that district officials should try to achieve ‘six feet when feasible.’

“Teachers and school support staff know that, without ensuring the resources to allow smaller class sizes, that is simply not feasible in almost any Connecticut classroom. The plan also includes no additional funding to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) for students and staff, which alone could cost tens of thousands of dollars for each district.

“Finally, the outline requires a great deal of further planning for districts over the next three weeks. Not addressed is how will they be able to effectively collaborate with teachers and other community partners.

“Clearly what Connecticut’s students, their families and educators need is a lifeline, not an anchor — unfortunately that is all this so-called ‘plan’ appears to be.”

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The Connecticut Education Association is Connecticut’s largest teachers’ union, representing active and retired educators across the state.

AFT Connecticut represents approximately 30,000 professionals across the state, including PreK-12 teachers, paraeducators and education support personnel in 32 local and regional school districts.

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