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July 21, 2020

The Honorable Doug Ducey
1700 West Washington Street
Phoenix, Arizona 85007
engage@az.gov

Dear Governor Ducey,

There is no doubt in our minds, your decisions regarding the pandemic, as well as other major issues, have been weighing heavily on your mind as you maneuver the complexities of this pandemic. As members of the Pendergast Elementary School District Governing Board serving over 9,000 students and 6,000 families in the cities of Avondale, Glendale and Phoenix we have difficult decisions to make everyday regarding educational policies and procedures in our district.

For the past few weeks, the district staff has engaged stakeholders and experts representing parents, teachers, administrators, support staff and community partners in Task Forces focused on a Safe Return to Pendergast Plan for the 2020-21 school year. The Task Forces covered important areas for reopening and used information and models from your office, the Centers for Disease Control, the Trust, Arizona Department of Education and others to bring forth research-based, pertinent information to incorporate into the plan. Surveys were created and sent to staff and families seeking their input on questions regarding the safe reopening of schools. Results were carefully reviewed and taken into consideration as part of the planning process that we adopted on June 30th.

For all Pendergast students, school will begin on Wednesday, August 5, through online Distance Learning. In being responsive to our students, staff, families and the communities we serve, our comprehensive plan includes strong accountability, daily attendance policies and accessibility for all students. This is to ensure an excellent education while prioritizing the health and safety for all students and staff. We realize that for PPE alone, it will cost the district an additional \$3 million.

Overwhelmingly, our stakeholders have expressed that we are not ready to reopen schools on August 17th. In our communities alone, we have over 3,000 cases of COVID-19 and the numbers are surging each day. Other districts have already postponed opening in person and we are urging you to let Arizona know we are not ready to safely reopen schools at this time.

As board members, our stakeholders have elected us and put their trust in us to do what is right. We cannot afford to risk even one life and are adamant about wanting to preserve the health and safety of everyone. Please know, we want nothing more than to see the curve flatten and our communities becoming healthier. In the meantime, we believe that staying at home is the best option at this time.

Sincerely,

Susan Serin, board president

Jete White, vice-president

Jose Arenas, member

Hilda Ortega-Rosales, member

Senator Martin Quezada, member