

August 4, 2020

Dear Families and Friends of Avalon and Brookewood:

We value the health and safety of our students and families, even as we also want very much to provide the opportunity for in-person instruction at our schools. As we work towards having the opportunity for in-person instruction, we have joined as plaintiffs in a complaint against Montgomery County's closing of independent and religious schools.

Months ago, we sought advice from the county on reopening and were instructed to look to the CDC guidance, which we did. Last week, when the county recommended that we close, we submitted questions about what the conditions for reopening would be and received a very unsatisfactory answer, a metric that would, in effect, keep all Montgomery County students at home for a year and possibly longer. Due to the lack of consultation by the county and the seemingly arbitrary decision-making they have engaged in, we feel filing this complaint is the right step. On Monday, Governor Hogan issued a new order allowing private schools the same privilege accorded public school districts in Maryland; To make their own decisions about whether to conduct in-person or online classes in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

In March we closed at the Governor's request in order to "flatten the curve," and we understand that all schools will likely need to open and close periodically over the coming year in order to help control the spread of the coronavirus in our community. We believe that remote learning, especially for an indefinite period, is not a satisfactory substitute for in-person school, and our schools value strongly the importance of community to the health and development of all children.

Please find below the current CDC guidance on closing schools to in-person instruction:

The decision to close schools for in-person learning should be made together by local officials – including school administrators and public health officials — in a manner that is transparent for students, staff, parents, caregivers and guardians, and all community members.

The decision to close schools for in-person learning should take into account a number of factors, such as:

- *the importance of in-person education to the social, emotional, and academic growth and well-being of students;*
- *the level of community transmission;*
- *whether cases have been identified among students and staff;*
- *other indicators that local public health officials are using to assess the status of COVID-19 in their area; and*
- *whether student and staff cohorts have been implemented within the school, which would allow for the quarantining of affected cohorts rather than full school closure.*

Sincerely,

R. J. Hawley
Executive Director of The Avalon School and Brookewood School

Kevin J. Davern
Head of School, The Avalon School

Richard B. McPherson
Head of School, Brookewood School