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Nilesh Kalyanaraman, M.D., F.A.C.P.
Health Officer

August 12, 2020

To Nonpublic School Leadership,

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected nearly every aspect of our lives. Anne Arundel County's priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic are to minimize transmission of the virus, to prevent illness and death from the virus, and to safely reopen schools to in-person instruction. Reopening schools is critical to the cognitive, social-emotional and physical development of the children in our county. Virtual instruction is a key bridge for when children cannot be in school due to COVID-19 related safety concerns. Our goal is to balance the benefits of in-person instruction with the risks posed by COVID-19.

Currently, community based transmission of COVID-19 remains elevated posing a significant risk of in-school spread of COVID-19. **At this time the Anne Arundel County Department of Health does not recommend that nonpublic schools in the County open for in-person instruction to start the 2020-2021 school year.** We instead recommend that schools open with virtual instruction while the Department of Health monitors the situation in the county to identify a safer opportunity to reopen schools to in-person instruction.

To reopen schools safely, a couple of conditions must be met. The rate of cases in the community must be low enough to minimize the risk of school based transmission. Well thought out plans for in-person instruction need to be developed and put into place including testing and contact tracing strategies.

The Anne Arundel County Department of Health recognizes that certain schools, particularly Special Education Schools that serve students with a range of disabilities, and certain programs may need to be conducted in person. Some schools may be interested in reopening as scheduled. Others are preparing to open when conditions provide a safer environment for reopening.

Nonpublic schools serving K-12 that are planning to reopen for in-person instruction in Anne Arundel County will be required to submit reopening COVID-19 safety plans to the Department of Health at least 14 days prior to the first day of in-person instruction. Nonpublic schools will also be required to report any COVID-19 positive staff or student to the Department of Health for contact tracing.

Safety plans should be submitted along with the proposed date of reopening, if known. For nonpublic schools that are already open, plans should be submitted within 3 days of receipt of this letter. Plans will

be reviewed by the Department of Health for compliance with all aspects of the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and [Maryland State Department of Education \(MSDE\)](#) guidance to ensure the safety of students and staff. Plans that comprehensively address safety will be approved. Plans that do not meet CDC and MSDE guidance will need to be modified and resubmitted for review and approval by the Department of Health. Nonpublic schools will be allowed to open or remain open only after their safety plan has been approved by the Department of Health. The Department of Health will maintain a list of schools approved for opening on its website.

Nonpublic schools should have a process in place to be notified by (1) students or their guardians and (2) staff if they are COVID-19 positive. This information must be shared with the Department of Health immediately so that expedited contact tracing can take place.

Please contact Karen Siska-Creel at hdsisk00@aacounty.org for further information and to submit safety plans. Please contact Karen Karnes at 410-222-4229 and hdkarn00@aacounty.org with COVID-19 positive staff or students. For further information and updates, please visit the [Back To School](#) section of the Anne Arundel County Department of Health website.

We look forward to partnering with you to ensure the healthy development of our children while keeping them and your staff safe during this pandemic.

In Health,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Niles Kalyanaraman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Niles Kalyanaraman, MD, FACP
Health Officer