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**Council of the Great City Schools®**

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January 22, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC

Dear President Biden:

Congratulations from the nation’s Great City Schools on your election and inauguration as America’s 46<sup>th</sup> President. Our urban public-school systems pledge their collaboration and resources in helping you meet your goals to reopen and improve the nation’s schools. We are writing to offer our help with two goals that are central to the success of your Administration: vaccinating some 100 million citizens within your first 100 days in office and reopening the nation’s schools within 100 days. We support both goals and are in a unique position to help you attain those twin objectives in ways that most others cannot.

Our organization, the Council of the Great City Schools, is composed of 76 of the nation’s largest urban public-school systems, including New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Our members range geographically from Anchorage to Miami and from Boston to San Diego. And we serve the very communities you will need to work the hardest to engage. Approximately 81 percent of our students are African American or Hispanic, some 72 percent are poor, and about 20 percent are learning English. In other words, as large urban centers, we are located precisely where your goals of greater equity and access can best be met. Public schools are one of the most trusted institutions in our communities and can help shape confidence that the vaccines are safe and worthwhile. Given trepidation around the vaccine and past mistreatment of people of color by the medical system, this is a critical asset.

We were heartened to read the nationwide vaccination plan that you put out last week, but we think we can augment your strategy and accelerate the attainment of your goals by enlisting the nation’s big city public school systems. We have the following assets that we can enlist—

- Some 12,000 school buildings in every major city in the nation that could be utilized as vaccination sites, rather than relying on centralized sites or hospitals that are sparsely located. Our schools are in every corner of our communities, including our poorest communities, and they are often used now for COVID-19 testing purposes. Most of these facilities have all-purpose rooms that could be used for vaccinations, smaller rooms that could be used as observation sites for those just receiving their shots, and bathrooms for those having to wait in line.
- Tens of thousands of school buses and drivers that could be deployed to transport individuals to vaccination sites or that might be able to be retrofitted to serve as mobile vaccination facilities. We have been able to effectively use our very large transportation systems throughout the pandemic to deliver millions of meals to children and families. With adequate support, we might be able to add refrigeration units to some vehicles for those vaccines that can be stored at moderate temperatures.

- Sophisticated communications systems that can reach out to tens of thousands of people at one time. These include robocalling capacity and PBS television and radio stations that many big city public school systems own and/or operate. These might be deployed to better inform the public about vaccination sites and dates.
- About ten thousand school nurses who, with some modest training from their local hospitals, could be enlisted to administer vaccines.
- Thousands of school custodians who could be used to prepare and clean vaccination sites; security staff who might be deployed to ensure safety; human resources staff who might be used to keep track of who is receiving the vaccinations, and information technology (IT) staff who might be used to create data bases or to coordinate with other local officials who have already developed tracking systems.

Many of our urban school systems have already taken the first steps to help. The Anchorage School District, for instance, is currently supporting the state’s vaccine efforts by providing 1,000 vaccinations per day for Alaska healthcare workers and community members 65 and older. The Jefferson County (Louisville) Public Schools has developed a video for the community on what the vaccination process will look like. The Dallas Independent School District is working with Dallas County Health and Human Services, Parkland Hospital, and other community organizations to secure vaccines for staff. The Los Angeles Unified School District has sought permission from state and local authorities to vaccinate staff and community members. The Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) has partnered with Jackson Health System (JHS) to provide COVID-19 vaccines to all district employees age 65 and older. Many, many others are stepping forward and would like to be asked to volunteer.

We encourage you to build our big city schools and educators into your nationwide vaccination strategy and planning—not only as front-line workers who should have priority access to vaccines and other resources, but as partners in the work of getting students back into classrooms and citizens back to work. And we urge you and your excellent team to set some clear and realistic expectations for the work that lies ahead for the nation’s schools, who would very much like to help you meet these critical national goals. We are confident that we can help you meet your critical goals of vaccinating 100 million people in your first 100 days and reopening our schools. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Michael O’Neill  
 School Committee  
 Boston Public Schools  
 And Chair  
 Council of the Great City Schools



Barbara Jenkins  
 Superintendent  
 Orange County (Orlando) Public Schools  
 And Chair-elect  
 Council of the Great City Schools



Ashley Paz  
School Board  
Fort Worth Independent School District  
And Secretary-Treasurer  
Council of the Great City Schools



Eric Gordon  
Chief Executive Officer  
Cleveland Metropolitan School District  
And Immediate-Past Chair  
Council of the Great City Schools



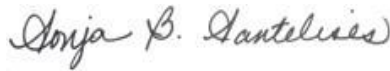
Richard Carranza  
Chancellor  
New York City Department of Education



Kelly Gonez  
School Board President  
Los Angeles Unified School District



Linda Cavazos  
School Board  
Clark County (Las Vegas) School District



Sonja Santelises  
Chief Executive Officer  
Baltimore City Public Schools



William R. Hite, Jr.  
Superintendent  
School District of Philadelphia



Guadalupe Guerrero  
Superintendent  
Portland (OR) Public Schools



Leslie Grant  
School Board  
Atlanta Public Schools



Siad Ali  
School Board  
Minneapolis Public Schools



Robert Runcie  
Superintendent  
Broward County Public Schools



Valerie Davis  
School Board  
Fresno Unified School District



Michael Hinojosa  
Superintendent  
Dallas Independent School District



Marcia Andrews  
School Board  
School District of Palm Beach County



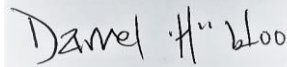
Elisa Vakalis  
School Board  
Anchorage School District



Sharon Contreras  
Superintendent  
Guilford County Schools



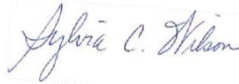
Marcelo Cavazos  
Superintendent  
Arlington (TX) Independent School District



Darrell Woo  
School Board  
Sacramento Unified School District



Tom Ahart  
Superintendent  
Des Moines Public Schools



Sylvia Wilson  
School Board President  
Pittsburgh Public Schools



Van White  
School Board  
Rochester City (NY) School District



Michael Casserly  
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