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Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

April 15, 2020

Dear Governor DeSantis:

Thank you for your work and leadership to keep Floridians safe during this challenging and unprecedented time. As Leon County Schools Superintendent, I have worked closely with my team to do everything within our power to make sure our students stay safe while adjusting to distance learning and remaining connected to their teachers – all while we strive to meet their needs for basic items like food to the fullest extent possible. I applaud our students, teachers, school staff, and parents for their heroic efforts to rise to this challenge.

As you consider next steps for Florida, I am writing to strongly urge you to keep schools closed to students and to continue distance learning for the remainder of the current school year. The latest forecast for Leon County shows the peak in cases likely not occurring until June. As difficult as the change to distance learning has been, our teachers, students, and parents have made the transition. It would be extremely disruptive, if not impossible, to shift back to finish the last few weeks of the school year in the classroom.

While a portion of parents might welcome a return to the classroom, others, concerned about the risk to their children's health, would not, and would instead insist on keeping them at home. Our teachers cannot effectively deliver education in two different modes, simultaneously operating live and virtual classrooms. With only 33 academic days remaining on the school calendar, it simply doesn't make sense and is not worth the risk.

In addition, returning to the classroom would represent a serious threat to a significant number of our teachers and staff, who are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 due to age or underlying health conditions. More than 250 of our employees are older than 65, and include many support staff such as bus drivers and food service workers.

While there are no easy solutions or decisions, I do believe keeping our schools closed to students is the right choice. I would welcome an opportunity to have a deeper conversation with you or Commissioner Corcoran about this. Many thanks for your leadership, service, and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Rocky Hanna'.

Rocky Hanna
Superintendent of Schools
Leon County

cc: Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran; Florida district superintendents

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