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VIA EMAIL

February 17, 2021

Howard County Board of Education
Attn: Dr. Chao Wu, *Chair*
10910 Clarksville Pike (Route 108)
Ellicott City, MD 21042

RE: Working-to-rule

Dear Chair Wu, Vice Chair Mallo, and members of the Board of Education,

Over the last several weeks, in response to the Board's refusal to listen to the concerns of its educators, nearly 80% of HCEA members voted on a work-to-rule resolution, **with 91% voting to authorize work-to-rule effective February 22**, and committing themselves to our actions. This is not our preference, but our entire staff has made it abundantly clear that educators must be vaccinated before returning to worksites.

There is overwhelming support for work-to-rule in every building, at every grade level, on every team, and in every department in our county. Work-to-rule will remain in effect until the following demands are met:

1. Ensure educators are immunized before physically returning to worksites, as other counties like Prince George's and Charles County have already done.
2. When staff return to worksites, HCPSS must adhere to metrics to prevent COVID spread.
3. Governor Hogan must release more vaccines, and the County must prioritize more vaccines for educators.
4. The Board of Education must stand up to bullying behavior from the State Superintendent and Governor Hogan. Our lives must matter more than politics.

It is clear to our staff that HCPSS is not prepared to safely handle the influx of returning staff and students, and that it is not in compliance with the CDC's *Mitigation strategies to reduce transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in schools*. In addition, because of the Board's abrupt decision to reopen March 1, hundreds of educators are still in limbo waiting to hear if their requests for accommodations and leaves of absences will be approved.

In addition, the rollout of vaccines to educators has been handled extremely poorly. Because of the Board's rushed timeline, staff are being pitted against one another to secure a first dose of the vaccine.

Those who are high-risk themselves, or who care for high-risk family members, feel that that the Board has ensnared them in a terrifying real-life *Hunger Games*.

Last night, over 700 cars with staff and parents rallied to the Board of Education to demand vaccines for educators. HCPSS security officials attempted to thwart our caravan by blocking the entrance to the Board of Education. Through its actions, HCPSS has shown that it is more interested in paying lip-service to the voices of educators rather than listening to the chorus of educators and parents who want safe schools.

This is an avoidable conflict. You chose to acquiesce to the Governor's demands, and you can also choose to postpone reopening until staff are fully immunized. You can return to sensible health metrics in compliance with CDC guidelines, and you can stand up on our behalf to bullying behavior by Governor Hogan and the State Superintendent.

We have pleaded with you for months. We have shared our stories and concerns. Our members will not wait any longer. This is within your authority to resolve, and we hope that you take this opportunity to resolve it with us. Members have authorized work-to-rule until you do so.

Sincerely,

Colleen Morris
HCEA President

cc: Dr. Michael J. Martirano, *Superintendent of Schools*
Pamela Murphy, *Director of Staff Relations*
Kristy Anderson, *MSEA General Counsel*
HCEA UniServ Directors