



Dr. Rob Haley, Superintendent

Dr. Marian Phelps, Superintendent

Dr. Ben Churchill, Superintendent

March 2, 2021

Dr. Naomi S. Bardach
Lead, Safe Schools for All Team
California Health and Human Services Agency

Dear Dr. Bardach:

On behalf of the 40,000 middle and high school students we serve, we are writing to encourage you to approve our districts' Safety Review Request applications no later than Friday, March 5, 2021. Carlsbad Unified School District, Poway Unified School District, and San Dieguito Union High School District have already received approval from the San Diego County public health officer, Dr. Wilma Wooten, as part of the Safety Review Request process.

As soon as we receive your approval, we'll welcome our middle and high school students back to in-person instruction. We write with urgency, as our students need desperately to be back in school.

Our districts have worked tirelessly to establish safe reopening plans that adhere to statutory and other requirements (COVID-19 School Safety Plan, CDPH checklist, guidance, and directive). We've been meticulous about contact tracing and precise about quarantining. We've added filtration devices and upgraded ventilation systems. We've implemented enhanced cleaning and disinfecting protocols. We've ensured physical distancing requirements. We've secured agreements with our labor partners. All of this work has been done in partnership with San Diego County's Public Health and K-12 Sector teams, County Superintendent Paul Gothold, and the San Diego County Office of Education.

Just days from all the secondary students in our districts having the opportunity to safely return to in-person learning as the next phase of our comprehensive reopening plans, the January 14 CDPH directive stopped everything. Thousands of secondary students were prevented from returning to the much-anticipated in-person learning and many students who were already receiving in-person learning were forced back to distance learning, threatening our enormous progress and forcing us to redo much of the work our staff has labored over for the last ten months.

In an EdSource article published on January 29, you said "the administration would create a process to permit some flexibility from the new rules 'in very specific instances' — but only if districts have a comprehensive Covid safety plan in place and can document that what they are doing is working."

We thank you for creating that process. As demonstrated by the approval of our local public health officer, we have documented that the virus transmission mitigation strategies in our comprehensive safety plans are working.

We request your approval to resume our phased reopening plans as quickly as possible by approving our applications by Friday, March 5, 2021.

Thank you again for prioritizing the needs of our students and their families as California continues to navigate these unprecedented times. We look forward to working with you to allow our schools to continue their safe reopening plans and help us address the needs of our students.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Churchill

Dr. Marian Phelps

Dr. Rob Haley