BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

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KATHRYN BARGER
SUPERVISOR, FIFTH DISTRICT
CHAIR OF THE BOARD

June 4, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

The future of Los Angeles County and the State of California rests with our children. Nothing is more urgent than protecting their care and well-being, especially during the public health crisis created by COVID-19. I join many in expressing my concern that any continuation of the closure of schools and suspension of normal summer activities for our children will gravely undermine their growth and development. Furthermore, we cannot fully reopen vital parts of our economy and allow parents to return to work without stable and supportive school, camp or recreational programs for children and youth. For this reason, I am asking you to immediately provide your support and guidance to facilitate the reopening of schools, summer camps and other youth programming effective June 12, 2020.

Currently summer school has all been moved online, and summer camps and recreational programs have been put on hold or cancelled. Although our teachers have done an incredible job adjusting and caring for our students in these drastically changing academic environments, the status quo is no longer sustainable. More than 1.5 million children in Los Angeles County have lost a quarter of their academic school year. Furthermore, we are learning from data:

- Children from low-income households have had disproportionately negative experiences with remote education. As reported by NPR, a recent study performed by ParentsTogether, an advocacy group, showed that 32% of low-income children did not have their own device to do schoolwork, and 40% of poorest students are accessing remote learning as little as once per week or less;
- The same study showed that approximately 40% of families of children with special needs say they are receiving no educational support;
- No child under the age of 18 in the State of California has died from COVID-19;
- This week the Southern California chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics stated that even with the risk of COVID-19, children need to be in school due to the critical educational, social, and mental and physical health services schools provide.

The State should be able to provide guidance for opening summer programs and schools using as a basis the existing guidelines the state provided for child care providers at the start

of this pandemic. These can be modified and extended to safeguard children and youth in schools, camps, and recreational programs for summer and fall.

We have successfully flattened the curve in Los Angeles County. We have also identified those most at risk of contracting COVID-19 and have redoubled efforts to protect our vulnerable populations. As an example, on May 26, 2020 our Board of Supervisors instructed our Director of Public Health to urgently refocus on residents in skilled nursing facilities where more than half of Los Angeles County COVID-19 related fatalities have occurred. We can protect all groups. *This includes protecting for the overall social and emotional well-being of our entire community, which is now at greater risk due to the closures of schools, businesses, and other vital institutions.*

With your support, Los Angeles County has re-opened restaurants, retail, hair salons, barbershops, and many other critical businesses and community organizations in the last few weeks. Working together, our Board and your office have made great strides in reopening Los Angeles County, particularly moving from Stage II to Stage III of the Resilience Roadmap.

I appreciate your leadership through these challenging crises, and your care for our businesses, organizations, and working families. I know that as a parent yourself, you grasp the critical link between supporting public health and supporting our students. As parents return to work, we must act urgently to ensure they have the requisite support needed for their children.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Barger

KATHRYN BARGER
Supervisor, Fifth District
Chair, Board of Supervisors