

**Superintendent Meloche, President Saidel, Vice President Neary, and Members
of the Cherry Hill Board of Education**

**Cherry Hill Public Schools
Malberg Administration Building
45 Ranoldo Terrace
Cherry Hill, NJ 08034**

On behalf of the members of the Beck Community, we would like to share our concerns and growing anxieties as the opening of school approaches. Knowing these are unprecedented times with fluid changes and constant challenges, we are seeking answers to the insurmountable questions that exist. We love our students, but we are not prepared to be our best selves for a number of reasons. We are not asking education to stop or be canceled, but instead request postponement to allow for a mentally and physically safe transitional period. Our suggestion is to move the scheduled in-service days from February and March to the beginning of the year to help us better prepare for a successful and seamless opening. This would also allow us the opportunity to remote teach from our classrooms to test the technology and troubleshoot with our students.

With Beck's current configuration, there continues to be a major concern with the ventilation system. It is a dated system which fails often during extreme temperatures and incites growing concerns of mold and mildew. There are many classrooms and offices with no windows and the HVAC systems do not work proficiently. This is compounded by the additional spread of COVID - a potentially deadly virus. We have specific concerns and questions that need answers before we can feel safe working in the building with children. Is air constantly circulating from vents to returns in each classroom and office? Are all of the vents and returns functioning properly? Where is the air coming from that is circulating through these vents? Is the air fresh or is the air recirculated from other parts of the building, thus potentially spreading the virus? Does the filter being used in the building's HVAC system meet the CDC requirements and recommendations relative to COVID? No one wants to be the next statistic! The way in which our rooms are configured could potentially spread the virus from one room to many others in a matter of seconds. That is not safe. With the spread of COVID or a potential of exposure, what will be the protocol for communication? Currently, communication is poor and staff have relied on rumors which heighten fear

and anxiety rather than being provided with written, accurate information in a timely manner. What will be the protocol in the event of an outbreak? Will all people who have had contact with an infected individual be expected to self isolate? Having so many unanswered questions prior to starting school is traumatic for the adults and the families we serve.

There have been serious discussions and concerns for our students' well-being. Many parents are sending their children to school believing that there will be opportunities for social interaction. Having students confined to one room does not lend itself to socialization. It is not healthy for middle school age students. The current school configuration is stark and cold, clearly not an inviting atmosphere for kids. We no longer see smiling faces, hear laughter, or indulge in engaging conversations. We are wearing masks where we struggle to breathe; hiding what we are feeling.

We are asking that you allow the teachers the time to test the technology in each of the classrooms we will be in to make sure it works; content and growing comfortable with its availability. Will our students be able to hear and see us while protecting the privacy of the students present? We are asking for students to be brought in slowly to ease their fears and possible concerns. Let them come in one cohort at a time to get the feel of being trained how to live stream within the school and our community expectations.

Lastly, do our parents actually know...

- Do they know their children are in ONE room all day?
- Do they know their children are cleaning desks?
- Do they know their children have limited restroom usage?
- Do they know their children have limited nurse visitation?
- Do they know their children are required to wear masks all day or administration will be calling home?
- Do they know their children are exposed to more than just the people in that one room because of the school configuration?
- Do they know that many classrooms are without windows or doors to the outside?
- Do they know live remote hybrid instruction is only once a week?

Respectfully,

CHEA Members of Beck Middle School