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### **MANS Urges Caution Regarding Future Pandemic Orders**

The Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools (MANS) urges state government officials to exercise caution when issuing future blanket COVID-19 Pandemic orders that impact the ability of schools to provide in-person learning for Michigan students.

Michigan's nonpublic schools have implemented strong health protocols for in-person learning and have had minimal cases of COVID-19 in their schools, particularly with respect to the school site being the place of transmission for the virus. Because of all the health protocols and precautions that are in place, data shows that nonpublic schools are places that are safe and not 'super-spreaders' of this virus.

"The health and safety of all students, educators and families has never been more important as COVID-19 cases increase throughout the state," said Executive Director Brian Broderick. "MANS member schools have been effective in carrying out the state mandated requirements for in person learning, even with limited financial and express support from the state and federal government. We believe that decisions to suspend in person learning are best made at the local level."

Policymakers must understand that the care and concern for the whole child is of paramount importance to all of Michigan's nonpublic schools and that faithful adherence to appropriate health related protocols will continue to be undertaken as we collectively battle this invisible disease. They must also recognize the social, economic, and mental health issues that are impacted by remote learning.

Unless local conditions warrant a change, K-8 schools should be allowed to remain open with safety protocols in place, for as Department of Health and Human Services Director Robert Gordon has correctly stated, younger children "are in most need of in-person instruction."

The health, safety, and welfare of students should always be the motivation behind policies and directives regarding education. Michigan's nonpublic schools have taken a variety of approaches to the education of more than 100,000 students in a safe and productive manner. These approaches include fully remote, hybrid, and in-person instruction.

MANS urges a public health perspective that allow schools to make decisions based on the needs of their communities and the ability they have to provide a suitable environment for learning. In- person learning should be supported whenever possible, unless the number of cases at individual school buildings require public health intervention.

Since early this year, Michiganders have battled the COVID-19 pandemic with great sacrifice of life and financial hardship. How we deal with the education of our youth will have long lasting impacts not only upon school children, but on the common good and the future of the state we love so dearly.

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