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5TH DISTRICT, FLORIDA

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COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

**Congress of the United States**  
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Friday July 31, 2020

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Governor of Florida  
400 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Governor DeSantis:

We write to express our concern over the Florida Department of Education's Emergency Order No. 2020-EO-06, mandating the reopening of physical school locations in August 2020 in the face of our state's growing COVID-19 pandemic. The education of students is a top priority for all of us, but it is critical to the health of all Floridians that our children, and those who enable their education, return to school when it safe to do so.

As of July 31, 2020, the Florida Department of Health (DOH) reported over 470,386 positive COVID-19 cases including 26,533 hospitalizations and 6,843 deaths due to the Coronavirus.<sup>1</sup> On July 30, 2020 alone, 257 Floridians died due to COVID-19.<sup>2</sup> These statistics are just part of the evidence that shows our state has not flattened the curve or COVID-19 and that the threat of contracting and spreading the virus remains high in Florida.

The order, signed by Florida Commissioner of Education, Richard Corcoran, on July 6, 2020 states that schools must reopen "with the full panoply of services for the benefit of Florida's students and families".<sup>3</sup> We want nothing more than for our children to return to school, but from the teachers, administrative staff, transportation and food service personnel, it takes a healthy community to ensure that our children are receiving a quality education. Due to the nature of the Coronavirus and how it spreads, hastily reopening schools poses an increased danger to the health and safety of all Floridians if students and staff are mandated to engage in in-person instruction as COVID-19 cases continue throughout our state.

Beyond their own risk of being infected at school, students and staff may unknowingly carry the deadly virus home and possibly expose their loved ones to it. Family and household environments throughout Florida vary in size and complexity. Many of these households with

<sup>1</sup> [http://ww11.doh.state.fl.us/comm/partners/covid19\\_report\\_archive/state\\_reports\\_latest.pdf](http://ww11.doh.state.fl.us/comm/partners/covid19_report_archive/state_reports_latest.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://ww11.doh.state.fl.us/comm/partners/covid19\\_report\\_archive/state\\_reports\\_latest.pdf](http://ww11.doh.state.fl.us/comm/partners/covid19_report_archive/state_reports_latest.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/19861/urlt/DOE-2020-EO-06.pdf>

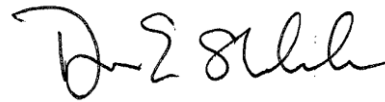
school age children include individuals with preexisting conditions and family members that are most vulnerable to the severe effects of COVID-19.

For the wellbeing of all Floridians during this COVID-19 pandemic, we urge you to reevaluate your administration's decision to require all school districts and scholarship student accepting private schools to reopen for in person educational instruction in August 2020.

Sincerely,



Al Lawson  
Member of Congress



Donna E. Shalala  
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor  
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings  
Member of Congress



Theodore E. Deutch  
Member of Congress



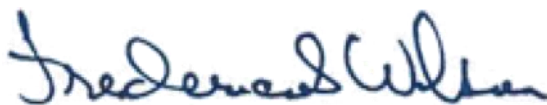
Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel  
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Frederica S. Wilson  
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