

JEFFERSON FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

LOCAL 1559

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, A.F.L.-C.I.O.

Affiliated With: Louisiana Federation of Teachers, A.F.L.-C.I.O. – Louisiana A.F.L.-C.I.O. – Greater New Orleans A.F.L.-C.I.O.

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Dear Dr. James Gray,

Yesterday, the Louisiana Department of Education released a dangerous new COVID-19 policy which could eliminate the quarantine requirement for students exposed to COVID-19. I hope that as a district we will continue to follow the science when dealing with this deadly disease, which has already claimed the lives of over 1,100 people in Jefferson Parish alone. We all want to see our children in school and learning, but we cannot prioritize a child's test scores over their health, or the health of our educators and their families.

This new policy will immediately increase the spread of COVID-19 in schools, which will have a ripple effect throughout the community. Now, as we work to recover from Hurricane Ida and many of our school buildings remain damaged, it is especially important that we prioritize safety. We cannot sit by and allow more children and their teachers to get sick when it can be avoided. As a COVID survivor myself, I understand how dangerous this virus is and I cannot watch more people needlessly get sick and potentially die.

On behalf of the children, and their parents and grandparents, together with all their family members who are vulnerable, and on behalf of the dedicated educators, and their parents and family members who are vulnerable, we call upon you as the leader of our school district to oppose this new policy and continue to follow the recommendations of the Louisiana Department of Health and the Center for Disease Control. These proven practices have helped to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools and has kept our students and staff safe. The wellbeing of staff and students should be the top priority as Jefferson Parish deals with the unprecedented circumstances of the past 18 months and continues to persevere through future challenges.

Sincerely,

Kesler Cameese-Jones, President
Jefferson Federation of Teachers