Governor Whitmer Appoints Educators, Parents, Students to COVID-19 Return to School Advisory Council

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LANSING, Mich. – Governor Gretchen Whitmer today announced a group of 25 leaders in health care and education to serve on the COVID-19 return to learn advisory council. The group of experts includes educators, parents, and students who will work closely with the governor as she continues to put the health and safety of our students and educators first.

"This group brings together experts in health care and education, including students, educators, and parents to think about how to ensure the more than 1.5 million K-12 students across Michigan get the education they need and deserve," **Governor Whitmer** said. "On behalf of our kids, their families, and the more than 100,000 educators in our state, we must all work together to get this right. I know this group is prepared to carefully examine the data and consult with experts when helping me determine what is best for our kids."

On May 15, 2020, Governor Whitmer signed Executive Order No. 2020-88 creating the COVID-19 Return to School Advisory Council. The Advisory Council was created to identify the critical issues that must be addressed, provide valuable input to inform the process of returning to school, and to ensure a smooth and safe transition back to school. The Council will act in an advisory capacity to the Governor and the COVID-19 Task Force on Education, and will develop and submit recommendations to the COVID-19 Task Force on Education regarding the safe, equitable, and efficient K-12 return to school in the Fall.

"Our number one goal on this advisory council is to follow the facts and data to ensure the protection of our students and educators," said **Tonya Allen**, President and CEO of the Skillman Foundation and Chair of the Return to Learn Advisory Council. "We are proud to serve as an advisory body to Governor Whitmer as she continues working hard on behalf of Michigan families everywhere. This is a crisis unlike any we've seen before, and we are committed working closely together to ensure we get this right."

The Return to Learn Advisory Council will recommend actions to remove statutory and administrative barriers to delivering education before Phase 6 of the MI Safe Start Plan and help develop and improve systems for academic support for students who experienced learning loss during the Spring/Summer 2020. The Council must report regularly to the COVID-19 Task Force on Education on its activities and make recommendations on an ongoing basis.

The Advisory Council will also include four participating members of the Michigan Legislature: Senators Wayne Schmidt and Dayna Polehanki and Representatives Aaron Miller and Sheryl Kennedy.

The Advisory Council will also include a public health workgroup that will be chaired by **Denise Fair**, the chief public health officer for the City of Detroit. She holds a Master of Public Health in Health Policy and Management from the University of California-Berkeley and a Master of Business Administration from Wayne State University.

The governor announced the following appointments to the COVID-19 Return to School Advisory Council:

Tonya Allen, of Franklin, is the president and CEO of The Skillman Foundation, and will serve as chair of the Return to Learn Advisory Council. She holds a Master of Public Health and a Master of Social Work from the University of Michigan. Ms. Allen is appointed to represent community members for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020. The Governor has designated Ms. Allen to serve as Chair of the Advisory Council.

Angela M. Blood Starr, of Kalamazoo, is the regional school health coordinator for the Calhoun Intermediate School District. She holds a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Western Michigan University. Ms. Blood Starr is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Nicole Britten, of Saint Joseph, is the health officer for the Berrien County Health Department. She holds a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases from Yale University. Mrs. Britten is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in public health for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Johanna L. Clark, of Frankenmuth, is the principal of Frankenmuth High School. She holds a Master of Education in Leadership and Master of Arts in Secondary Education from Saginaw Valley State University. Mrs. Clark is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Mary R. Gebara, of Okemos, is a trustee with the Okemos Public Schools Board of Education and chairperson of staff outreach for the Okemos Education Foundation. She holds a Master of Arts in Child Development from Michigan State University. Ms. Gebara is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Dominic A. Gonzales, of Lincoln Park, is a student in the Detroit Public Schools Community District. Mr. Gonzales is appointed to represent students for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

David Hecker, Ph.D., of Huntington Woods, is the president of AFT Michigan. He holds a Ph.D. in Industrial Relations from University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Hecker is appointed to represent community members for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Paula J. Herbart, of Lansing, is the president of the Michigan Education Association. She holds a Bachelor of Music from the University of Michigan. Ms. Herbart is appointed to represent community members for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Melissa Isaac, of Mount Pleasant, is the director of education for the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan. She holds a Master of Science in Administration from Central Michigan University. Ms. Isaac is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Elizabeth S. Koschmann, Ph.D., of Ann Arbor, is a licensed psychologist and an assistant research scientist in psychiatry at the University of Michigan. She holds a Ph.D. in School Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Dr. Koschmann is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in mental health for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Stephen McNew, Ed.D., of Monroe, is the superintendent of the Monroe County Intermediate School District. He holds a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from The University of Toledo. Dr. McNew is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Vic Michaels, of Detroit, is the assistant superintendent of student services and athletics for the Archdiocese of Detroit Catholic Schools and director of the Catholic High School League. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of Detroit. Mr. Michaels is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Justin S. Michalak, of Grosse Pointe Woods, is the assistant superintendent for special education for the Macomb Intermediate School District. He holds a Master of Education from Saginaw Valley State University. Mr. Michalak is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Nicholas J. Paradiso, III, of Grand Rapids, is the vice president of government relations for National Heritage Academies. He holds a Master of Public Administration from the University at Albany. Mr. Paradiso is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Lisa M. Peacock, of Traverse City, is the health officer for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. She holds a Master of Science in Nursing from Grand Valley State University. Ms. Peacock is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in public health for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Kevin Polston, of Grand Haven, is the superintendent of Godfrey-Lee Public Schools. He holds a Master of Education and a Specialist in Education from Grand Valley State University. Mr. Polston is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Gwendolyn R. Reyes, M.D., of Grand Blanc, is the assistant clinic director at the Hurley Children's Clinic, director of the pediatric residency program at the Hurley Children's Hospital, medical director for the Flint Community Schools Wellness Program, and a clinical assistant professor in the Michigan State University Department of Pediatrics and Human Development. She earned her Doctor of Medicine from Michigan State University. Dr. Reyes is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in pediatrics for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Robert Shaner, Ph.D., of Shelby Township, is the superintendent of Rochester Community Schools. He holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Oakland University. Dr. Shaner is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Anupam Chugh Sidhu, of Canton, is the instructional technology manager for Wayne RESA and president of the Plymouth-Canton School Board. She holds a Master of Education in Instructional Technology from Wayne State University. Ms. Sidhu is appointed to represent parents for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Travis Smith, Ed.D., of Marquette, is an elementary school principal in Marquette Area Public Schools. He holds a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from Central Michigan University. Dr. Smith is appointed to represent school leaders for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Joshua J. Smith, of Jackson, is a school counselor for Western School District in Parma, a lead facilitator for the Michigan College Access Network, and a counselor at A Healing Place. He holds a Master of Arts in Counseling from Spring Arbor University. Mr. Smith is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in mental health for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Stephanie M. Sutton, of Commerce Township, is a central clinical infection preventionist for the Beaumont Health System. She holds a Master of Public Health from the University of Michigan. Ms. Sutton is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in epidemiology for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Gregory Talberg, of Williamston, is a teacher with Howell Public Schools. He holds a Master of Educational K-12 Administration from Michigan State University and a Master of Education in Social Studies Education from the University of Florida. Mr. Talberg is appointed to represent educators for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Ridgway H. White, of Fenton, is the president and CEO of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Hobart College. Mr. White is appointed to represent community members for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

Kymberli A. Wregglesworth, of Onaway, is a teacher with Onaway Area Community Schools. She holds a Master of Arts in Education from Michigan State University and a Master of Arts in American History and Government from Ashland University. Ms. Wregglesworth is appointed to represent educators for a term commencing June 3, 2020 and expiring December 31, 2020.

These appointments are not subject to advice and consent of the Senate.

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