Idaho State Board of Education

650 W. State Street ● Room 307 ● Boise, ID ● 83702
P.O. Box 83720 ● Boise, ID ● 83720-0037

For Immediate Release
April 6, 2020

Contact: Mike Keckler
208-332-1591 (office)
208-866-5734 (cell)
Mike.Keckler@osbe.idaho.gov

BOARD EXTENDS SOFT CLOSURE FOR K-12 SCHOOLS WITH OPTION FOR REOPENING

The Idaho State Board of Education today extended its soft closure of public schools and charter schools for the remainder of the school year.

However, the State Board also left the door open for local school boards to potentially reopen their schools under criteria that will be developed and considered by the State Board at its next meeting on April 13.

"We have areas of our state where COVID-19 cases have not occurred and we need to be flexible and provide guidance to our local districts and charters to make the best decisions for their areas," State Board President Debbie Critchfield said. "We will work on the criteria this week in consultation with public health officials and school leaders and take a formal vote at our special Board meeting next week."

Here is the Board motion, which was approved unanimously:

"*I move to extend the soft closure to the end of each school districts and charter schools 2019-2020 academic school year or until such time as local and state social distancing orders have been lifted and re-entry criteria established by the Board have been met."*

Two weeks ago, the Board approved the statewide soft closure through April 20. The guidance, which is in effect, directed districts and charters to provide three essential services:

- Provide food services to underserved populations and childcare for community members who provide critical services.
- Develop and implement plans for delivering remote or distance learning strategies (online, video, teleconference, and packets).
- Develop a plan to provide special education-related services.

The State Board today also heard updates from the presidents of Idaho's four-year institutions who expressed concerns about how the outbreak might impact enrollments and potentially create "serious financial challenges" totaling several million dollars across Idaho's higher education system.

The Board approved the first reading of an amended policy to create more flexibility for institution presidents in the area of human resources management due to of unforeseen catastrophes such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposal will be considered for final approval at the next week's special Board meeting.

#####