



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Hispanic Quality of Life Commission

Recommendation Number (20200824-3c): Pflugerville ISD Must Ensure Safety of All Staff, Students, and Families Equitably

WHEREAS, it is the value of the City of Austin to be an inclusive city for all of its citizens including those of diverse racial, ethnic, religious, and national origin backgrounds;

WHEREAS, Pflugerville ISD currently has 26,053 enrolled students for the 2020-2021 school year;

WHEREAS, during the 2018-2019 school year, 25,361 students were enrolled in PfISD: 15.3% African American; 0.2% American Indian; 8% Asian; 48.6% Hispanic; 0.2% Pacific Islander; 23.1% White; and 4.5% Two or more races;

WHEREAS, roughly 35% of PfISD is within Austin city limits;

WHEREAS, Delco Elementary, Dessau Elementary, Parmer Lane Elementary, River Oaks Elementary, Dessau Middle, Westview Middle, and Connally High reside within Austin City Council District 7; and Copperfield Elementary resides within Austin City Council District 1;

WHEREAS, the Austin Public Health Interim Guidance on Reopening for Austin-Travis County Schools, dated August 12, 2020, recommends centering equity in plans and implementation, and states "Schools should actively apply an equity lens to the creation and implementation of health/safety and operational plans.";

WHEREAS the Austin Public Health Interim Guidance on Reopening for Austin-Travis County Schools, dated August 12, 2020, states "Hispanic and black children had the highest rates of COVID-19– associated hospitalization," and, "the rates among Hispanic and Black children were nearly eight times and five times, respectively, the rate in white children." And "About one-third of hospitalized children had to be admitted to the ICU, which is similar to findings among adults.";

WHEREAS, PfISD does not have an Equity Office and has not mentioned how the school reopening plan ensures equitable decisions and policies are being implemented to protect Hispanic/Latinx and Black employees, students, and families;

WHEREAS, the Austin Public Health Interim Guidance on Reopening for Austin-Travis County Schools, dated August 12, 2020, recommends using cleaning and disinfecting products that meet EPA disinfection

criteria; however, the campuses are being treated with BIOPROTECT, which is not listed on the EPA's website as a disinfectant for use against COVID-19;

WHEREAS, some campuses have requested additional Plexiglas to ensure safety of all students and staff, yet have been told that they have reached their Plexiglas allowance;

WHEREAS, employees are already voicing concerns that not all schools are consistently implementing all measures;

WHEREAS, the Austin Public Health Interim Guidance on Reopening for Austin-Travis County Schools, dated August 12, 2020, states "When planning for student return to on-campus learning, administrators should consider student needs, staffing availability, adequacy of facilities, and mitigation efforts. If any of these needs are lacking, the school districts should reduce the percentage of on-campus population to the next lowest level until these needs are sufficiently met." indicating PfISD is not ready at Stage 4 to return at the up to 25% on-campus learning stage and needs to move back to Stage 5 100% virtual learning;

WHEREAS, employees submitted alternative work requests and whole departments received similar copy and paste answers denying their requests;

WHEREAS, some employees considered high-risk for severe illness (i.e., persons with type 2 diabetes mellitus, etc.) and some considered at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (i.e., severe asthma, pregnancy, Type 1 diabetes mellitus, etc.) were denied;

WHEREAS, some of the responses included false information, indicating the staff member was the only individual able to provide those services on campus, although other licensed members provide are also assigned to the campus and provide the same services;

WHEREAS, PfISD has had the option of extending virtual learning and has been considering this option since their August 6, 2020, board meeting;

WHEREAS, PfISD has received numerous emails, calls, and outreach indicating staff, parents, and students are not comfortable returning to in-person instruction as scheduled on September 8, 2020;

WHEREAS, on August 20, 2020, several people testified to delay the start of school;

NOW, THEREFORE: BE IT RESOLVED that the Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission recommends that the members of Austin City Council and Austin Public Health submit a request for the Pflugerville Independent School District Board and the Superintendent to:

1. Extend virtual learning for the additional 4 weeks in order to delay the start of in-person instruction and help mitigate the spread of COVID-19;
2. Ensure cleaning and disinfectant products meeting EPA standards and truly eliminate the presence of COVID-19;
3. Review their alternative work arrangement process to ensure equitable decisions and to protect vulnerable populations. Some supervisors advised employees to obtain an Americans with Disabilities Act Request for Accommodations Form; however, due to the current pandemic, many doctors' offices are overwhelmed and are not able to quickly return the forms. Additionally, if a doctor's visit is needed, many do not have appointments available for at least a

month. PfISD's current policy states that an employee must return to work until the form is received, putting vulnerable people at unnecessary risk.; and

4. Establish a PfISD Equity Office in Pflugerville ISD. Like many school districts, PfISD is not immune to disproportionality. The pandemic has only further highlighted inequities. For example, in a district of roughly 27,000 students, a survey of 21,000 responses found that almost 1,000 Pflugerville ISD students lack internet access, and virtual learning was not delayed to ensure equal access to all students. PfISD's first day back for students was August 13, and students are still continuing to pick up devices. Additionally, at the August 20, 2020, board meeting, they discussed the need for hot spots to provide internet access to families. The lack of devices and internet will only widen the achievement gap.

Date of Approval:   August 24, 2020  

Record of the vote: (Unanimous on a 7-0 vote)

Attest:   Amanda Jasso  

(Staff or board member can sign)