



SAINT PAUL FEDERATION
OF EDUCATORS LOCAL 28



Dear Mayor Carter and Saint Paul City Council,

On Wednesday, August 5, 2020, the SPPS Board of Education and Superintendent Joe Gothard made the decision to begin the school year in Distance Learning. As educators, we believe this is the best option to keep our students, families, and coworkers as safe as possible at this time.

In making this courageous decision, we also recognize that many of our students and families will face serious challenges as they navigate caring for their children at home while providing basic needs for their households. As our public schools have become the last social safety net, many families will look to us for solutions. We cannot, and should not, take on this fight for necessary resources alone. The City of Saint Paul must prioritize the needs of families in this critical time.

As we look to the start of the school year, one of the biggest barriers our families face is access to reliable high-speed internet. We know that many families cannot afford the cost or do not have access to credit to secure access to reliable internet connections.

This past spring, many of our students struggled to complete assignments using their phone, often going over data plans and resulting in costs families could not easily afford. Our district purchased hot spots attempting to fill the needs of students, but they often were unreliable and came at a high cost to a school district that is already pushed to the limit financially.

Saint Paul Public Schools, and the city of Saint Paul more broadly, are already burdened by the consequences of generations of disinvestment and a legacy of policies rooted in racism. Decades of unfunded education mandates have required the residents of Saint Paul to bear the cost of educating our children by voluntarily increasing our taxes. We cannot wait any longer to address the urgent needs of our communities.

The health and economic effects of this pandemic have made it impossible for us to ignore the fundamental inequities in our city, schools, and communities.

A return to normal will not be possible for some time, if ever, and for our Black and Indigenous communities and other communities of color, "normal" represents a state of unacceptable inequity.

We, as a community, have a profound moral decision ahead of us.

The Saint Paul City Council has already shown through your work on housing relief and support for small businesses in our community the understanding that families need support right now. Mayor Carter's expansion of the Bridge Fund, and People's Prosperity Guaranteed Income Pilot show commitment to building stronger communities.

Therefore, we're calling on the Saint Paul City Council to work with our school district and state legislators to secure free, reliable high-speed internet for the City of Saint Paul.

Our students can't wait. Our families can't wait. Our city can't wait.

Saint Paul Federation of Educators Committee on Political Education

Annaka Larson, Chair

Janey Atchison, Sarah Bosch, Camila Davila, Joan Duncanson, Jeff Garcia, Laurel Kuhner Berker

Yasmin Muridi, Beth Swanberg