

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Bernard C. “Jack” Young**  
*Mayor, City of Baltimore*

**Linda Chinnia**  
*Chair, Baltimore City Board of  
School Commissioners*

**Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises**  
*Chief Executive Officer*

September 18, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Once again, I would like to congratulate every member of the City Schools team for the successful launch of virtual learning across the district. In doing so under these unusual and difficult circumstances, we have met our most immediate responsibility to the students and families of Baltimore – an achievement for which we can all take justifiable pride.

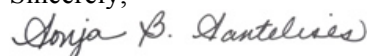
I am especially proud of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic last spring, when we acted decisively and pivoted to virtual learning with no warning. While those actions were necessary and critically important to our students and families, they resulted in significant, but unavoidable expenses to the district over the past six months and moving forward. Expenses included the purchase of approximately 55,000 laptops for students and teachers, 15,000 hotspots for student broadband access, and large quantities of cleaning supplies for our buildings – among many other items. While the district has received several COVID-related grants, a large gap remains between expenses incurred and grant funding. At the same time, we’re experiencing significant reductions in revenue usually generated by meals served through the school lunch program.

We must also consider the possibility that significant revenue reductions at the city and state levels could negatively impact City Schools’ resources in future district budgets, while additional federal assistance remains an unknown. In summary, we are faced with the possibility of financial challenges for the foreseeable future; it is therefore our responsibility to take appropriate cost-saving measures now to ensure that we retain sufficient resources to meet our obligations to the students and families of Baltimore City. Taking actions like freezing hiring allows us to conserve resources and emphasizes our commitment to maintaining an environment of stability and transparency for our schools, employees and those whom we serve.

Just as we did in confronting the budget shortfall in FY18, district leadership will do everything in our power to balance our obligations as responsible financial stewards with our determination to safeguard the wellbeing and stability of our schools and the members of the City Schools team. While we remain hopeful that additional funding may become available through legislative action at the state and/or federal level, we must act now to preserve financial flexibility in anticipation of events as they unfold throughout the school year. As more information on funding becomes available, any updates will be shared with you.

There will undoubtedly be challenges, but I am confident that the City Schools team has the dedication and determination to ensure that we continue to do whatever is necessary for our students to succeed and thrive. Stay healthy, and thank you for everything you do every day.

Sincerely,



Sonja Brookins Santelises, Ed.D.  
Chief Executive Officer