

MAJORITY MEMBERS:

ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT, VIRGINIA,
Chairman

RAÚL M. GRIJALVA, ARIZONA
JOE COURTNEY, CONNECTICUT
GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN,
NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
FREDERICA S. WILSON, FLORIDA
SUZANNE BONAMICI, OREGON
MARK TAKANO, CALIFORNIA
ALMA S. ADAMS, NORTH CAROLINA
MARK DESAULNIER, CALIFORNIA
DONALD NORCROSS, NEW JERSEY
PRAMILA JAYAPAL, WASHINGTON
JOSEPH D. MORELLE, NEW YORK
SUSAN WILD, PENNSYLVANIA
LUCY MCBATH, GEORGIA
JAHANA HAYES, CONNECTICUT
ANDY LEVIN, MICHIGAN
ILHAN OMAR, MINNESOTA
HALEY M. STEVENS, MICHIGAN
TERESA LEGER FERNANDEZ,
NEW MEXICO
MONDAIRE JONES, NEW YORK
KATHY E. MANNING, NORTH CAROLINA
FRANK J. MRVAN, INDIANA
JAMAAL BOWMAN, NEW YORK
MARK POCAN, WISCONSIN
JOAQUIN CASTRO, TEXAS
MIKIE SHERRILL, NEW JERSEY
JOHN A. YARMUTH, KENTUCKY
ADRIANO ESPAILLAT, NEW YORK
KWEISI MFUME, MARYLAND



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND LABOR
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2176 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

MINORITY MEMBERS:

VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA,
Ranking Member
JOE WILSON, SOUTH CAROLINA
GLENN THOMPSON, PENNSYLVANIA
TIM WALBERG, MICHIGAN
GLENN GROTHMAN, WISCONSIN
ELISE M. STEFANIK, NEW YORK
RICK W. ALLEN, GEORGIA
JIM BANKS, INDIANA
JAMES COMER, KENTUCKY
RUSS FULCHER, IDAHO
FRED KELLER, PENNSYLVANIA
GREGORY F. MURPHY, NORTH CAROLINA
MARIANNETTE MILLER-MEEKS, IOWA
BURGESS OWENS, UTAH
BOB GOOD, VIRGINIA
LISA C. MCCLAIN, MICHIGAN
DIANA HARSHBARGER, TENNESSEE
MARY E. MILLER, ILLINOIS
VICTORIA SPARTZ, INDIANA
SCOTT FITZGERALD, WISCONSIN
MADISON CAWTHORN, NORTH CAROLINA
MICHELLE STEEL, CALIFORNIA
JULIA LETLOW, LOUISIANA
VACANCY

May 10, 2021

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

The New York Post recently reported on the outsized influence teachers unions had over the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) when the agency was developing updated school reopening guidance in February.¹ This report is alarming considering the harm extended school closures have caused students and families.

The article notes several emails that demonstrate how American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten was given special access to shape the guidance document that has since been disseminated to schools. If the AFT has this much influence with the CDC, it raises significant concerns about the influence the organization wielded over the Department of Education in the development of its guidance and handbook.

Parents are rightly frustrated at the willingness of all levels of government to bend to cynical political elites ahead of their children. At a recent Committee on Education and Labor hearing, we heard from Mr. Reade Bush, a father of two, who noted in his testimony before the Committee about his son:

“In November he was admitted to Children’s National Hospital for 4 days. The doctors told us that his symptoms were from a massive deterioration of his Autism due to the social isolation. He ended up on 6 medications and the doctors said what he needed most

¹ https://nypost.com/2021/05/01/teachers-union-collaborated-with-cdc-on-school-reopening-emails/amp/?__twitter_impression=true

was to return to full time, in-person learning so that he could begin to solidify his identity with real, in-person teachers and peers.”²

His wife was forced to quit her job to homeschool their daughter, also in special education, because her public school was unwilling to meet her IEP requirements, requesting to reduce her support to a four-day virtual school week instead.³

A month earlier, the Committee heard from Mrs. Jennifer Dale, who testified about her family’s struggles with the extended school closures. While all three of her children were impacted, her daughter Lizzie faced the most harm. Mrs. Dale discussed the struggle and fight to get Lizzie meaningful, in-person instruction from her teachers. While Lizzie’s siblings were able to attend private school in-person, full-time, at the time of the hearing, Lizzie’s public school was still closed.⁴

The Dale and Bush families are not alone. Millions of women have left the workforce to help supervise their children’s at-home education. Students’ self-reported mental health has dropped 40 percent since the pandemic began and mental health-related emergency room visits are up 31 percent for children ages 12 to 17.⁵

Knowing this, it is entirely inexcusable for teachers unions to sway official guidance on school reopenings that flies in the face of students’ educational and mental health needs.

To help us understand the extent of teachers union involvement in developing the guidance documents and handbook developed at the Department of Education, please respond to the following questions no later than two weeks from the date of this letter.

1. What interaction did Department of Education officials have with the AFT, National Education Association, or their local affiliate officials regarding the school reopening guidance and handbook?
2. The New York Post article says the CDC gave the AFT opportunity to provide feedback on the guidance. Did the Department of Education provide the same opportunity to any union officials? Please provide the documents provided, the feedback received, and a list of which officials in the Department worked with the unions. Please also include whether any officials from the White House were included in those communications or conversations.
3. Please detail what other groups were provided the opportunity to offer feedback on the recommendations, and provide the feedback received from those groups. Please also

² <https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/BushReadeTestimony050621.pdf>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/DaleJenniferTestimony032521.pdf>

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (November 13, 2020), “Mental Health-Related Emergency Department Visits Among Children Aged <18 Years During the COVID-19 Pandemic—United States, January 1-October 17, 2020.” <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6945a3.htm>

include who from the administration, including White House officials, was provided that feedback.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have additional questions or comments, please contact Mandy Schaumburg (mandy.schaumburg@mail.house.gov) of the Committee staff at (202) 225-4527.

Sincerely,

Virginia Foxx

Virginia Foxx
Ranking Member
Committee on Education and Labor

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "B. Owens", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Burgess Owens
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Early Childhood,
Elementary, and Secondary Education