August 1, 2020

Dear Governor Hogan,

As you may be aware, an unelected health officer from Montgomery County has abused his authority by closing private and religious schools under the threat of imprisonment! We are writing to ask that you declare schools essential in Maryland, thus protecting the rights of citizens in Montgomery County and across our state.

Under CDC guidelines, schools may open safely. Parents and school administrators are able to determine whether their children can attend school safely, not an unelected bureaucrat.

Walmart, Home Depot and other entities are deemed essential by your order. If a decision is made to close those businesses, it rests in the hands of the business itself; just as the decision to shop at those stores rests in the hands of individuals. If hardware and lumber are essential, educating our children is more essential.

The negative health impacts that these prolonged closures will have on the mental health and intellectual health of our children is very real. These impacts must be considered by parents and school administrators just as much as the potential spread of COVID-19. Just as public school administrations have been given the opportunity to make these decisions, so should private and religious schools. Private schools that are able to reopen following CDC guidelines should be able to open if they so choose. We believe the health officer’s actions prohibiting the reopening of schools and threatening imprisonment is a blatant abuse of power.

Furthermore, infringing on the religious rights of parents and students by unelected bureaucrats must be stopped immediately. Religious institutions are protected under the Constitution of the United States of America.

The teachers unions have a great deal of power in the state. Private and religious schools do not have to give in to the dictates of teachers unions and often deliver a superior education than public schools. Because of this they are consistently targeted by teachers unions who use their allies in government to act against private and religious school. While we understand that there is nothing the teacher’s union hates more than competition, this action is a step too far.

We hope you will take immediate action to stop this intrusion into non-public schools in Montgomery County today.

Sincerely,

Nic Kipke
Minority Leader

Kathy Szeliga
Minority Whip