



ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Our Community. Our Environment.

3415 28th Street Port Huron MI 48060

April 7, 2021

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Dear School Administration, Boards of Educations, and parents.

St Clair County (SCC) is experiencing the most severe outbreak of COVID since the beginning of the pandemic, with averages over 249 cases per day (these only represents cases reported to SCC Health Department -SCCHD) and a testing positively rate of 27.3%. Additionally high rates of confirmed variants are circulating within St. Clair County, including in most schools. These variants are more contagious (spread faster) and are potentially more dangerous. The increasing care of severely ill people with COVID19 challenges local hospitals, and deaths are climbing. St Clair County is leading the nation with new cases and the local data reflects that there is no area of the county that is escaping this challenge.

Prior to spring break, SCCHD advised schools that had identified cases and appeared to have in-school transmission should go to remote learning. Now that time period has elapsed it is clear that the "plateau" has not yet been reached in St. Clair County cases and a reasonable secure environment for in-person learning must be provided. Although younger individuals often do not exhibit severe symptoms, and often have no symptoms, their infection can easily spread to others with higher risk conditions. This includes vulnerable students, staff, and family and community members. Isolation and quarantine policies are still required which is resulting in very high levels of absenteeism.

Because of these unfortunate circumstances the St Clair County Health Department and Homeland Security & Emergency Management strongly and urgently recommends that all in-person learning K-12 is paused. It is strongly recommended that this pause:

- Be continued until a reduction in cases is observed
- Occur as soon as possible and continue until at least April 19, to be reevaluated by each school district the week prior.
- Be re-evaluated on a weekly basis.
- Allow for districts to continue to diligently track, investigate, and report cases providing for better data.

SCCHD considers these recommendations prudent and compelling in the context of current disease burden and consistent with the data available. It is also the belief of SCCHD and HSEM that reasonable boards and leadership responsible for the safety and welfare of its student body would respond accordingly and comply with these recommendations.

Thank you for all you do for our youth and our community, together we will find our way to a better place.

Annette Mercatante MD, MPH
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