

BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor, City of Baltimore

Cheryl A. Casciani
*Chair, Baltimore City Board of
School Commissioners*

Dr. Sonja Brookins Santelises
Chief Executive Officer

January 19, 2018

Corey Gaber
Baltimore Movement of Rank-and-File Educators
Via Email: cbgaber@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Gaber,

First, let me assure you that I share your concerns for the health and wellbeing of our students and staff, and recognize the importance of providing them with a safe, comfortable learning environment. As you know, the extremely cold temperatures in the first half of January presented the district with significant challenges, due to problems with heating systems in more than 60 of our school buildings.

While our facilities crews, assisted by Baltimore City agencies and several partners from the private sector, worked around the clock to restore heat to our schools, the unprecedented scale of the problem required more time to fully address than any of us would have desired. I'm sure that you understand as well as anyone the scope of the problem we face in maintaining the state's oldest building infrastructure with inadequate funding.

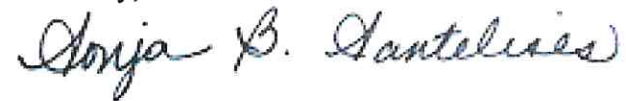
Having said that, we recognize the necessity to clarify the procedures for monitoring and responding to extreme weather conditions. In the short term, we have established a procedure in which all schools are provided with electronic thermometers and electric probes that can instantly scan temperatures in any area of the building. These readings will be used to make accurate, rapid decisions on whether a building should remain open. It's important to recognize that while our target for adequate heating is 67 degrees, it is not always possible to maintain that target temperature in every area of buildings as old as ours. We have therefore established 60 degrees as the decision point for closing individual areas (such as specific classrooms) or the entire building. In the event that comfortable temperatures cannot be maintained in individual classrooms, students and staff will be moved to a warmer area within the building.

District office staff will use the temperature scanning/reporting system described above to make decisions regarding school closures. There are a number of factors that must be considered and coordinated in a decision to close an individual school, including the safe transportation of students, provision of meals, and timely, adequate notification of families. The procedures put into place throughout the district will ensure that closure decisions can be expedited, while still taking all of these factors into account. The district is working with Baltimore City to establish alternative locations for serving our youth during school closures, in addition to the emergency meal sites already in place.

All of these measures will allow the district to be more proactive in responding to extreme weather in the near term, and we are planning additional enhancements (such as a network of

remote sensors) that will improve our response further in the mid-term. However, I am confident that BMORE recognizes the real challenge, which is the state of our school buildings due to systemic, multigenerational underfunding of our facilities through inequities in the CIP funding process. I recognize and appreciate your advocacy in identifying these problems and fiercely advocating for solutions, and we look forward to your continued partnership on behalf of the students and families of Baltimore.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sonja B. Santelises". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Sonja Brookins Santelises, Ed.D.
Chief Executive Officer