



August 17, 2020

Mike Morath  
Commissioner of Education  
Texas Education Agency  
1701 N. Congress Avenue  
Austin, Texas, 78701

Dear Commissioner Morath,

On behalf of the 2048 people in Texas living with cystic fibrosis (CF), we write to thank the Texas Education Agency for ensuring all school districts in the state offer remote learning as an option for the 2020-2021 academic year. Providing an alternative to in-person instruction will help safeguard people with CF and their families from exposure to COVID-19.

#### **About cystic fibrosis and COVID-19**

Cystic fibrosis is a life-threatening genetic disease that affects more than 30,000 people in the United States, including 1000 school-age children in Texas. CF is a complex, multi-system disease that causes the body to produce thick, sticky mucus that clogs the lungs and digestive system, which can lead to life-threatening infections. Cystic fibrosis is both serious and progressive; lung damage caused by infection is irreversible and can have a lasting impact on length and quality of life. While great strides have been made in the treatment of the disease, CF continues to be a severe condition for which COVID-19 can pose serious health risks. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), those with CF may be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.<sup>1</sup>

COVID-19 continues to present serious risk to Texas residents, including those with CF. As of August 14, 2020, more than 165,000 people in the United States have died as a result of COVID-19, including 9,034 in Texas.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, over the last seven days, more than 46,933 cases in Texas have been reported to the CDC—the third highest in the nation. As the risks continue, the CDC has recommended that Americans continue to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and protect those who are most vulnerable to infection.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Remote learning as an option for the 2020-2021 academic year**

We commend Texas and Texas Education Agency for your efforts to ensure that all school districts in Texas extend remote learning as an accommodation for high-risk students and their families, including children with CF and their siblings. This policy follows the recommendations recently released by both the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which state that special accommodations should be made to support at-risk students who need to quarantine at home.<sup>4,5</sup> We appreciate your recognition that remote learning must be offered as an

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/s0528-coronavirus-death-toll.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/prepare-safe-return.html>

accommodation for children with CF and their siblings so that families can make the best choice for them during this difficult time.

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The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation thanks you for ensuring that local school districts adopt remote learning as an option for people with CF and their families during the 2020-2021 academic year. We appreciate your leadership during this crisis and stand ready to serve as a resource to the state of Texas as you plan for the reopening of K-12 schools this fall. Please contact Lauren Ryan, Sr. State Policy Specialist, at [lryan@cff.org](mailto:lryan@cff.org) or (301) 841-2632 if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary B. Dwight". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "D".

Mary B. Dwight  
Senior Vice President of Policy & Advocacy