



March 29, 2020

Dear Honorable Members of the Board of County Supervisors,

I hope you and the rest of the Board of County Supervisors, as well as county staff, are healthy and safe. As you know, Governor Ralph Northam has canceled school for Prince William County Public Schools, along with all school divisions in the state, for the remainder of this school year. We, like many districts, are challenged with how to deliver instruction and learning during this closure.

Our School Division is at a significant disadvantage because we have not had the funds in the past to give each of our students a digital device. This has affected our ability to implement online learning during this emergency crisis. As you know, there is uncertainty around when we can return to normal. I worry about the second wave of coronavirus in the fall. If we sustain another closure and we do not have the ability to deliver online learning, our students will be at an even greater disadvantage. This is especially true for our high school students.

We had previously planned to provide digital devices to all of our students over the next four years. In our current budget, you will see this as a digital equity line item. However, in our current emergent crisis, we are facing enormous challenges in delivering instruction. A digital device for all of our high school students would be extremely helpful to address this challenge. Many school divisions around the nation are buying those devices now to address similar concerns.

The School Board unanimously indicated by a poll taken on March 27, 2020 that the Board would like to make a formal request of the Board of County Supervisors to consider emergency funding to acquire computer devices for all of our high school students. (We anticipate that this poll will be formally approved by the School Board at its April 1, 2020 meeting.) Overall, this investment will cost nearly \$10 million. I am requesting the Board of County Supervisors approve an allocation of \$5 million to Prince William County Public Schools under the authority provided by Virginia Code § 44-146.21 and the County's Declaration of Emergency to buy devices for our high school students. PWCS would provide the remaining \$5 million to complete this purchase.

We have already put together a Technology Improvement Plan that has existed for a number of years to address online learning. I am asking for your support to help us accelerate this. I would not ask for this money if we were not in the COVID-19 emergency crisis. We are facing something we have never faced before, and that will require solutions that are both innovative and creative.

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I hope you will consider this for an emergency agenda item on March 31. PWCS will obviously abide by all procurement rules in order to achieve the best possible pricing for our School Division and taxpayers.

I hope the Board of County Supervisors will consider this emergent funding to quickly help us provide high school students access to online learning and deliver a higher level of education in this time of crisis.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Babur Lateef', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Babur Lateef, M.D.
Chairman At-Large
Prince William County School Board