

THOMAS P. TIFFANY
7TH DISTRICT, WISCONSIN



WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1719 LONGWORTH HOB
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-3365

DISTRICT OFFICES:
2620 STEWART AVE, SUITE 312
WAUSAU, WI 54401
(202) 225-3365

P.O. Box 586
HAYWARD, WI 54843
(202) 225-3365

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear School Administrators and Staff,

On the one year anniversary of our K-12 schools closing their doors for full virtual learning, I want to take a moment to reflect back on the impact this year had on our children. I also want to emphasize that both the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) direct schools to make individualized decisions based on the needs of their student population. We cannot allow children to continue to be penalized by virtual learning models when our top public health officials have clearly stated classrooms are safe for in-person return. The CDC guidance acknowledges that the needs of a school in a rural setting will look vastly different than the needs of a school in an urban setting. You as administrators know your students better than anyone so let's work together to tailor solutions to their specific learning needs.

You may remember in December of last year, the CDC revised their guidance on school closures to allow for as much in-person learning as administrators deemed feasible. The guidance states, "It is critical for schools to open as safely and as soon as possible, and remain open, to achieve the benefits of in-person learning and key support services."

This statement highlights another tragedy beyond the children who become left behind in a virtual learning model due to socioeconomic constraints. Children who suffer from emotional damage due to lack of human interaction and social development are being pushed aside without the counseling services offered in a traditional school structure. Data being reported from school districts across the country shows stark numbers of children seeking out behavioral health specialists for issues ranging from anxiety to depression to suicidal thoughts. Additionally, those critical support services include social work and free lunches for children in low-income and vulnerable home settings.

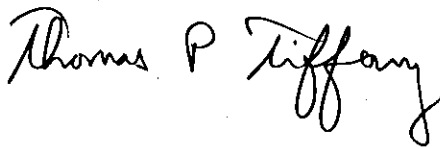
Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers himself called virtual learning scenarios "messy" saying, "It's worked for some school districts and for some school districts there's been some trauma around that." We simply cannot sit back and allow the word trauma to be something we associate with K-12 learning for multiple school years.

I would also like to highlight a study conducted by the CDC in Wood County, which helped prove that classroom transmissions are virtually zero for both teachers as well as students. During the thirteen weeks of the in-person learning study, transmission rates were zero percent amongst teachers and 0.2 percent amongst students. Most importantly, not a single case was contact traced back to classroom settings, but rather community transmission outside of school. In fact, participants in the school study had a 37 percent lower transmission rate than the rest of

Wood County during the same time period, showing students may actually be safer operating within a traditional school schedule during the day.

As we look ahead to the 2021-2022 school year, the critical takeaway from the guidance being released by the CDC, DPI, and DHS is you as administrators have the flexibility to adjust your learning models to best meet the needs of your students without the threat of legal action. This has been a difficult year for school administrators, and we thank you for your work to ensure children are continuing to learn no matter the circumstances. We must work together to interpret the science and establish learning models that put kids back in the classroom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas P. Tiffany". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'T' at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail at the end.

Tom Tiffany
Member of Congress