



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, MCPS and three union associations (the Montgomery County Education Association, the local Service Employees International Union and the Montgomery County Association of Administrators and Principals) wrote a joint message to staff and faculty about the potential of reopening classrooms to students and formally provided employees the minimum 45-day notice required prior to reopening.

“When health and safety conditions allow, we will begin a phased transition back to in-person instruction to ensure all students have the access and opportunity they need to reach their full potential while maintaining student and staff safety,” Superintendent Jack Smith and the three union presidents [wrote](#). “To be clear, this does not mean that in-person instruction will begin in 45 days. Instead, it means that we can reopen impact bargaining and do more in-depth collaborative planning for the eventual return to instruction in buildings.”

Below are statements from the two candidates for the At-Large seat on the Montgomery County Board of Education, Ms. Lynne Harris and Dr. Sunil Dasgupta. These statements were submitted to Silver Chips via email on Saturday, September 26.

MS. LYNNE HARRIS: “Personally I’m completely frustrated that the associations, especially MCEA, would NOT get in the boat and row since Spring to help create meaningful Covid plans for teaching and learning, especially limited in-person instruction—they were obstructionist, inflammatory, and just said ‘no’ to everything. We need plans in place NOW to bring small groups of students into schools safely—for special education instruction, for specialized arts and other programs that require access to MCPS facilities and resources to be equitably delivered, for CTE programs that can’t be delivered virtually etc.”

A blog post by Ms. Harris can also be read on her website ([linked here](#)).

DR. SUNIL DASGUPTA: “MCPS’ decision to start the 45 day clock on potentially reopening school buildings is premature. We are only four weeks into the first quarter, so it is unclear why MCPS is making an announcement on a 45 day timeline that could place some students and staff back in buildings in early November, after announcing in July that the first semester would be online-only. To calm anxieties and provide a clear path forward, MCPS leadership should focus on three goals in the near term: clear communication, meeting student needs in the context of online learning, and collaboratively developing a safe reopening plan with employees, families, and students.”

Ms. Harris—who was [endorsed](#) by the editorial board last May—and Dr. Dasgupta will square off for the At-Large seat on November 3.

Silver Chips will continue to offer coverage on reopening and the election (including personal columns from both Ms. Harris and Dr. Dasgupta) via social media and in our next issue set to print in mid-October.

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