



Dear FCFT members,

This is a confusing and scary time for many of us.

Since January, in response to the coronavirus, the FCFT's attention has been focused on how to ensure the health and safety of our families and communities. Now, since the World Health Organization has labeled the coronavirus a global pandemic, our attention must be on everything: prevention and precaution, treatment, and the short- and long-term economic impact of COVID-19 on families and communities.

Across the country, schools are grappling with their response and emergency plan for the coronavirus. Public schools in Washington, D.C. and Fairfax County, Va. will be closed on Monday, March 16th so staff can get prepared and train for a possible school closure. In Washington, D.C., Schools Without Walls closed down for a deep cleaning after a possible outbreak, and in New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo issued new guidance for all New York schools requiring schools to close down for a 24-hour period pending an assessment. So far in Washington state, at least 115 schools have closed for at least a day in order to undergo deep cleaning.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention cautions that the spread of the new coronavirus will get worse in the United States before it gets better. But we've seen that the comprehensive response to COVID-19 in both China and South Korea—where they have used widespread testing and quarantines—appears to have stemmed the spread of the virus and is a very good sign.

The difference in the United States is that we are not fighting COVID-19 with all

the tools we need because, unlike China and South Korea, the federal government has cut public health infrastructure and does not have enough tests for the coronavirus to use them preventively, as opposed to when a cluster erupts. Nonetheless, we wanted you to know what our national, AFT is doing related to preventing, treating and dealing with the long-term impacts of COVID-19 to protect people, prevent the spread and limit the ravages to our economy:

- We are focused on the health and safety of frontline healthcare providers. This means fighting for proper safety equipment, including N95 masks. It also means pushing for high standards for workplace safety, even as the CDC attempts to roll back safety standards, potentially putting healthcare workers at risk.
- We are equally focused on the health and safety of children, families and communities, and maintaining as much normalcy as possible. We know that social distancing, limiting who can be in schools beyond students and staff, and closing schools when necessary flattens the curve of exposure to the virus. But we also need to ensure that if (and when) schools close, distance and online learning is done in a positive, equitable and beneficial way—and that children who rely on schools for meals and a safe and welcoming environment have access to those supports.
- We are supporting efforts to reduce the economic impacts of the pandemic. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has proposed a multibillion-dollar package of policies and programs to fight the spread of COVID-19 and help ensure that our economy and working people and their families are protected. It includes emergency paid sick leave, free coronavirus testing, provisions to protect frontline healthcare workers, and food assistance for seniors and vulnerable children and families. This bill, combined with the initial \$8.3 billion in emergency funding to fight the coronavirus, is exactly what's needed.

Our national, AFT has done numerous information sessions since the coronavirus emerged, and we'll do the largest telephone town hall to date this Saturday at 2 p.m. Eastern. We will highlight what we know, provide our recommendations and answer your questions. [**You can sign up for the town hall here.**](#)

And right now, you can help by sending a letter to your senators telling them to pass the vital comprehensive package that I mentioned above to protect the health of our families and communities, as well as to address the short- and long-term impacts to their economic well-being. [**You can send the letter by clicking here.**](#)

And I want to make sure you have all the resources we've created. We have been working with experts for months on preparing resources and fact sheets for all our divisions. This includes step-by-step guidance on what you should be asking your employers—as individuals and as a union—everything from their pandemic preparedness plan and their infectious disease cleaning protocols, to their teleworking and leave policies. [All of those can be found here.](#)

I hope you can make it to the telephone town hall on Saturday. There will be plenty of space for questions from members. I know that things are scary right now, and we're all disappointed at how unprepared this administration was for this crisis. But I know that if we care about each other and show up for each other and fight for what's needed, we can get through this together.

In unity,

Tina Williams

FCFT President

PS : Here's a list of our resources and a few of the many things we've done to prepare and protect ourselves during this crisis.

- [Resources for all divisions.](#)
- Share My Lesson and Colorín Colorado [resources for educators and parents.](#)
- An [educator checklist](#) to prepare for potential remote learning.
- We joined with UNITE HERE to [call for paid sick days.](#)
- We joined the Association of Flight Attendants to call for [a coordinated federal response plan to the virus.](#)
- We joined with other healthcare unions to [call on the CDC to maintain safety standards for frontline workers.](#)

Share My Lesson:

To help you prepare for possible school closures, Share My Lesson launched a [new community for educators, school staff, parents and community members](#) to find and share ideas, tips, resources and free lessons. Our Remote Learning Community has content on the coronavirus, learning-at-home lesson plans for teachers and parents, and resources on social-emotional learning, mental health and trauma-informed practices.

In this online community, you can:

- [Join a discussion](#) based on the grade or subject you teach to share ideas and ask the community for advice.
- [Upload a lesson plan or resource](#) that would be helpful for other educators or parents across the country.
- Stay up to date on all new coronavirus resources for school preparation and closure.

We thank you for your patience and support as we continue to address the multi-faceted challenges related to planning for Coronavirus (COVID-19).

As this situation continues to evolve and we will keep you updated. Updates can be found on:

www.fcft.org/coronavirus

<https://www.fcps.edu/news/coronavirus-update>.

Thank you for your support and dedication to our FCPS families.

In unity,

Tina Williams

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