

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 4, 2021

### **Governor Whitmer Creates the Student Recovery Advisory Council**

**LANSING, Mich.** -- Governor Whitmer today signed Executive Order 2021-02, to create the Student Recovery Advisory Council of Michigan. As Michigan continues to work around the clock to eliminate COVID-19, the Student Recovery Council will provide guidance and recommendations to ensure Michigan students have the tools and resources they need to get back on track.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has hit Michigan hard, and our students, families, teachers, and school staff have all felt the strain. Still, our educators have worked tirelessly to teach our children during this pandemic under the most stressful conditions, and for that our state is forever indebted to them for their service,” said **Governor Whitmer**. “It is important to remember that schools also provide other services that students need to succeed including reliable access to the internet, nutritious meals, and mental health supports. COVID-19 has exacerbated inequities in our education system, and we know more work is needed to address the significant impact this pandemic has had on our children. This Council will be integral to ensuring our students and educators are equipped with everything they need to thrive.”

Last summer, the governor launched the Return to School Advisory Council which developed a framework to inform K-12 districts planning for the 2020-2021 school year. This past month, the governor's administration prioritized educators for vaccine distribution in Michigan, in order to get kids back in school and put our state on a path to recovery.

“It is an honor to serve as the chairperson of the Student Recovery Advisory Council,” said **Kevin Polston**, chair of the Student Recovery Advisory Council. “Last summer, this collaborative group of engaged citizens developed the MI Safe School Roadmap, which was vital to supporting in-person learning. We look forward to ‘fixing the road ahead’ for the state of Michigan through a safe, equitable, and high-performance educational system that provides access and opportunity for each child to reach their full potential.”

“While the pandemic has underscored the critical importance of face-to-face learning for our society, it also has spotlighted vast differences in the challenges that students, families, and communities face,” said **Ridgway White**, president and CEO of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation in Flint and a philanthropic representative to the Advisory Council. “Instead of thinking of going back to school, I hope we can focus on moving education forward in Michigan and ensuring that educators have the resources they need to meet all students where they are.”

Housed within the Department of Technology Management and Budget, the council will

be composed of 29 members from diverse backgrounds who are appointed by the governor. The Council is tasked with:

- Developing and submitting recommendations to the governor, state superintendent, and state budget director regarding student recovery.
- Recommending actions to develop and improve systems for academic support for students who experienced learning loss due to COVID-19.
- Recommending actions to develop and improve systems for mental and physical health for students impacted by COVID-19.
- Recommending actions to develop and improve systems to support high school students transitioning into postsecondary education.
- Recommending actions to develop and improve out-of-school time supports, including, but not limited to, summer school, before and after school programs, and extended school years.
- Assembling critical voices from the education and public health communities to assist in identifying key challenges students face due to the pandemic.
- Providing other information or advice or take other actions as requested by the governor.
- Reporting regularly to the governor on its activities and make recommendations on an ongoing basis.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has reminded us how important our education system is to the success of our children. As a pediatrician, I provide comprehensive care to my patients and their families, of which school success is an important component,” said **Dr. Gwen Reyes**, Director of the Pediatric Residency Program at Hurley’s Children’s Hospital in Flint. “Being part of the Return to School Advisory Council is a perfect example of the collaborative and interdisciplinary approach we must take in order to understand the diverse impact of the pandemic and move forward. I am honored to be part of the ongoing work and recovery for our children and hope the Student Recovery Advisory Council serves as a foundation to ongoing collaborative work in the future.”

The governor has appointed the following individuals reflecting the diverse geographic and demographic composition of this state and representing parents, students, school leaders, educators, individuals with expertise in public health, pediatrics, mental health, and community members:

**Kevin Polston**, of Grand Haven, is the superintendent of Godfrey-Lee Public Schools. He holds a Master of Education and a Specialist in Education from Grand Valley State University, a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Social Studies from Michigan State University and is currently pursuing a doctorate degree at Central Michigan University. Mr. Polston is appointed to represent school leaders and is designated to serve as Chair of the Council.

**Angela M. Blood Starr**, of Kalamazoo, is the regional school health coordinator for the Calhoun Intermediate School District. She holds a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Western Michigan University and a Bachelor of Science in Physical

Education from Grand Valley State University. Ms. Blood Starr is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Nicole Britten**, of Saint Joseph, is the health officer for the Berrien County Health Department in Benton Harbor. She holds a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases from Yale University and a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences from Western Michigan University. Mrs. Britten is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in public health.

**Craig D. Carmoney**, of Sanford, is the superintendent of Meridian Public Schools. He holds a Bachelor of Science in History from Grand Valley State University and a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership from Saginaw Valley State University. Mr. Carmoney is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Johanna L. Clark**, of Frankenmuth, is the principal of Frankenmuth High School. She holds Bachelor of Science degrees in Education and Psychology from Central Michigan University and a Master of Education in Leadership and Master of Arts in Secondary Education from Saginaw Valley State University. Mrs. Clark is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Mary R. Gebara**, of Okemos, is a trustee with the Okemos Public Schools Board of Education and chairperson of staff outreach for the Okemos Education Foundation. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Central Michigan University and a Master of Arts in Child Development from Michigan State University. Ms. Gebara is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Dominic A. Gonzales**, of Lincoln Park, is a current high school senior in the Detroit Public Schools Community District. Mr. Gonzales is appointed to represent students.

**David Hecker, Ph.D.**, of Huntington Woods, is the president of AFT Michigan. He holds a Ph.D. in Industrial Relations from University of Wisconsin-Madison, Master of Science in Business Administration from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Behavior from SUNY at Binghamton. Dr. Hecker is appointed to represent community members.

**Paula J. Herbart**, of Lansing, is the president of the Michigan Education Association. She holds a Bachelor of Music from the University of Michigan. Ms. Herbart is appointed to represent community members.

**Melissa Isaac**, of Mount Pleasant, is the director of education for the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Education and a Master of Science in Administration from Central Michigan University. Ms. Isaac is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Elizabeth S. Koschmann, Ph.D.**, of Ann Arbor, is a licensed psychologist and an assistant research scientist in psychiatry at the University of Michigan. She earned

her Ph.D. in School Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Wesleyan University. Dr. Koschmann is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in mental health.

**Stephen McNew, Ed.D.**, of Monroe, is the superintendent of the Monroe County Intermediate School District. He holds a Master of Education in Career and Technical Education and an Educational Specialist in Educational Leadership from Wayne State University and a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from The University of Toledo. Dr. McNew is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Vic Michaels**, of Detroit, is the assistant superintendent of student services and athletics for the Archdiocese of Detroit Catholic Schools and director of the Catholic High School League. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Education from the University of Detroit. Mr. Michaels is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Justin S. Michalak**, of Grosse Pointe Woods, is the assistant superintendent for special education for the Macomb Intermediate School District. He holds a Master of Education and an Educational Specialist from Saginaw Valley State University and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Grand Valley State University. Mr. Michalak is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Faye Nelson**, of Grosse Pointe Woods, is the director of Michigan programs for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Mercy College of Detroit and a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Detroit School of Law. Ms. Nelson is appointed to represent community members.

**Nicholas J. Paradiso, III**, of Grand Rapids, is the vice president of government relations for National Heritage Academies. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Syracuse University and a Master of Public Administration from the University at Albany. Mr. Paradiso is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Lisa M. Peacock**, of Traverse City, is the health officer for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. She holds a Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Nursing from Grand Valley State University. Ms. Peacock is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in public health.

**Angelique N. Peterson-Mayberry**, of Detroit, is the president of the Detroit Public Schools Community District Board of Education, vice chair of Detroit Youth Sports Commission, and a member of the Detroit Public Schools Foundation Board of Directors. She holds a Bachelor of Administration from the Detroit College of Business. Mrs. Peterson-Mayberry is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Bill Pink, Ph.D.**, of Ada, is the president of Grand Rapids Community College. He earned his Doctor of Philosophy in Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum from the University of Oklahoma, Master of Education from the University of Central Oklahoma, and Bachelor of Science in Education from Oklahoma Christian University.

Dr. Pink is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Gwendolyn R. Reyes, M.D.**, of Grand Blanc, is the assistant clinic director at the Hurley Children's Clinic, director of the pediatric residency program at the Hurley Children's Hospital, medical director for the Flint Community Schools Wellness Program, and a clinical assistant professor in the Michigan State University Department of Pediatrics and Human Development. She earned her Doctor of Medicine from Michigan State University and Bachelor of Science in Biopsychology from the University of Michigan. Dr. Reyes is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in pediatrics.

**Robert Shaner, Ph.D.**, of Shelby Township, is the superintendent of Rochester Community Schools. He holds a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from Oakland University, Educational Specialist in Administration from Wayne State University, Master of Arts in Education from Central Michigan University, and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Detroit. Dr. Shaner is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Anupam Chugh Sidhu**, of Canton, is the instructional technology manager for Wayne RESA and president of the Plymouth-Canton School Board. She holds a Master of Education in Instructional Technology from Wayne State University and a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics from Eastern Michigan University. Ms. Sidhu is appointed to represent parents.

**Erin Skene-Pratt**, of Haslett, is the interim network lead for the Michigan After-School Partnership. She holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in English Literature and Journalism from Michigan State University and a Master of Public Administration from Western Michigan University. Ms. Skene-Pratt is appointed to represent community members.

**Joshua J. Smith**, of Jackson, is a school counselor for Western School District in Parma, a lead facilitator for the Michigan College Access Network, and a counselor at A Healing Place. He holds a Master of Arts in Counseling and Bachelor of Arts in History and Psychology from Spring Arbor University. Mr. Smith is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in mental health.

**Travis Smith, Ed.D.**, of Marquette, is an elementary school principal in Marquette Area Public Schools. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Special Education and a Master of Education in Special Education from Grand Valley State University, Education Specialist in Administration and Supervision from Northern Michigan University, and a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from Central Michigan University. Dr. Smith is appointed to represent school leaders.

**Stephanie M. Sutton**, of Commerce Township, is a central clinical infection preventionist for the Beaumont Health System. She holds a Master of Public Health from the University of Michigan and a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from Wayne State University. Ms. Sutton is appointed to represent individuals with expertise in public health.

**Gregory Talberg**, of Williamston, is a high school teacher with Howell Public Schools. He holds a Master of Education in Social Studies Education from the University of Florida and a Master of Educational K-12 Administration and Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from Michigan State University. Mr. Talberg is appointed to represent educators.

**Ridgway H. White**, of Fenton, is the president and CEO of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation in Flint. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from Hobart College. Mr. White is appointed to represent community members.

**Kymberli A. Wregglesworth**, of Onaway, is a teacher with Onaway Area Community Schools. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from Alma College, Master of Arts in Education from Michigan State University, and a Master of Arts in American History and Government from Ashland University. Ms. Wregglesworth is appointed to represent educators.

The Advisory Council will also include four participating members of the Michigan Legislature: Senators **Wayne Schmidt** and **Dayna Polehanki** and Representatives **Lori Stone** and **Brad Paquette**.

The council will serve until December 31, 2021.

To view Executive Order 2021-02, click the link below:

- [EO 2021-02 Student Recovery Advisory Council.pdf](#)

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