

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Response to Senator DeSteph's Letter Criticizing Governor's "Back to School" Plan

(Virginia Beach, VA): In his letter to Governor Northam dated June 18, 2020, Senator Bill DeSteph expressed criticism of the Governor's recently announced "Back to School" plan dictating school schedules in the Commonwealth. Citing the Constitution of Virginia, Senator DeSteph clarified:

"Despite the emergency authority being executed by your office, it is the General Assembly, not the Governor, that is given the power and authority to formulate the policies in our educational system for school boards to apply."

In response to Senator Bill DeSteph's letter, the Governor's representative, Chief of Staff Clark Mercer, acknowledged that, as stated by Senator DeSteph, it is the individual school districts that have the authority to set school schedule. Not the Governor.

"Each district has flexibility to come up with its own plan that they will submit to the Department of Education. What the state has put out is guidance based on CDC guidelines. Some districts may want more distance learning, many will want less- we would expect many districts to be at regular capacity when the school year begins."

As Senator DeSteph expressed in his letter, the Governor's attempt to mandate school policy was nothing short of gubernatorial overreach. According to Senator DeSteph, "This is patent misuse of executive privilege at a time of great strife and instability." He continued, "Virginia does not need abuse of power; we need leadership that balances the health and economic needs of all citizens to ensure the continued well-being of the Commonwealth."

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About Senator DeSteph (SD-8)

Elected to the Senate of Virginia in 2015 and 2019, Senator DeSteph is a veteran, entrepreneur, leader, and father whose chosen pursuit is to serve and protect our nation's citizens. Senator Bill DeSteph represents the 8th District in the Senate of Virginia. The 8th District includes portions of the city of Virginia Beach. More information can be found at <http://billdesteph.com/>.