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News & Updates for the Windham - Bennington Vermont House District
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July 29th 2020

VERMONT STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Laura Sibilgia



Bookmark for updates:

Vermont Department of Health [2019 Novel Coronavirus Current Status in Vermont Webpage](#) for updates.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control [Coronavirus Disease page](#)

World Health Organization [Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

Department of Labor

[FAQ for Employers and Employees](#)

Government Operation

Governor Phil Scott
[Executive Orders](#)

[Number 01-20](#)
declaring a State of Emergency
in Vermont & National Guard
Call Out

[Amendment to 01-02](#)
Declaration of State of
Emergency in Response to
COVID-19 and National Guard
Call-Out - Amended and
Restated

[ADDENDUM 1 to 01-20](#)
prohibits all non-essential mass
gatherings to the lesser of fifty
(50) people or fifty percent (50%)
of the occupancy of a facility

[ADDENDUM 2 to 01-20](#)

Good evening,

Over the past few weeks I have been talking with parents, teachers, administrators, board members, legislators and officials in the Scott administration about issues arising from operating our schools during the pandemic.

The Superintendents, administrators, staff and school boards in the Windham Central Supervisory Union and the Windham Southwest Supervisory Union have been working diligently to put out operational information that aligns with guidance from the Agency of Education and the Vermont Department of Health. I want to encourage you to listen and communicate with those folks regarding the operation of our schools.

At the same time the legislature and administration are having policy discussions about health and safety, funding, and parameters for closing a school. The latest information from Governor Scott, Commissioner Levine and Sec. French are below.

I want to hear from you about your concerns, ideas and what you need from the state of Vermont in order to keep making the best decisions for your student, your health and your district. To that end, I am hosting a listening session tomorrow, Thursday July 30th at 7 pm. This session will be recorded.

Parents, teachers and taxpayers in WSWSU and WCSU let's talk about back to school:

Time: Jul 30, 2020 07:00 PM Eastern Time
Join Zoom

Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87482334656?pwd=Y25sWDZmWS8vTS96WkJudm9ydDIKZz09>

Meeting ID: 874 8233 4656
Passcode: 624729

One tap mobile
+13126266799,,87482334656#,,,,,0#,,624729# US (Chicago)
+16465588656,,87482334656#,,,,,0#,,624729# US (New York)

20/21 School Year Information from the Vermont Agency of Education

Prohibits on-premises consumption of food or drink

ADDENDUM 3 to 01-20

Suspension of all Non-Essential Adult Elective Surgery and Medical and Surgical Procedures

ADDENDUM 4 to 01-20

Closure of Close-Contact Businesses and Further Restrictions of the Size of Mass Gatherings

ADDENDUM 5 to 01-20

Work from Home Order

ADDENDUM 6 to 01-20

Stay Home to Stay Safe Order

ADDENDUM 7 to 01-20 Requirement to quarantine

ADDENDUM 8 to 01-20

Non-Congregate Sheltering in Vermont; Extension of Certain Deadlines Relating to Closures of DMV and Bars and Restaurants

ADDENDUM 9 to 01-20

Extension of State of Emergency Declared March 13, 2020; Other COVID-19 Related Directives and Clarifications

ADDENDUM 10 to 01-20

Work Smart & Stay Safe - Restart VT: Phase I

ADDENDUM 11 to 01-20

Work Smart & Stay Safe -- Restart VT: Phase II

ADDENDUM 12 to 01-20

Work Smart & Stay Safe -Restart VT: Phase III

ADDENDUM 13 to 01-20

Play Smart and Play Safe: Restart Phase V

ADDENDUM 14 to 01-20

Be Smart, Stay Safe

ADDENDUM 15 to 01-20

Outdoor Restaurants, Bars and Other Establishments that Offer Food and Drink

ADDENDUM 16 to 01-20

Close Contact Businesses; Large Social Gatherings

Addendum 17 to 01-20

Modified Quarantine Restrictions on Travelers Arriving in Vermont;

A Strong and Healthy Start: Hybrid Learning During the 2020-2021 School Year

GOVERNOR PHIL SCOTT, HEALTH AND EDUCATION EXPERTS ADDRESS SCHOOL REOPENING AND ANNOUNCE UNIVERSAL SCHOOL OPENING DATE

Montpelier, Vt. – At a press conference Tuesday, Governor Phil Scott addressed school reopening and announced he will issue an Executive Order to set Tuesday, September 8 as the universal start date for student instruction.

This action gives schools an additional one to two weeks to prepare staff and test the systems they've built over the summer to provide the best possible start for students when they return.

“School districts, school boards, teachers and administrators should take this extra time to make sure they, and their hybrid and online solutions, are ready and effective so we can deliver for our children and build confidence in the public education system’s ability to be flexible and responsive – because faith in the system is key to returning to in-person instruction,” said Governor Scott.

Governor Scott was joined by Education Secretary Dan French, Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD, and Rebecca Bell MD, MPH, FAAP, pediatric critical care physician at UVM Children’s Hospital and the president of Vermont’s chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics to discuss school reopening plans and address health considerations that inform the recommendations for in-person instruction.

The group emphasized the benefits of in-person instruction for children, especially those 10 and under, and the safety of doing so based on the state’s health guidance and Vermont’s low disease prevalence. While the Governor encouraged districts to work towards expanding the number of in-person instruction days, he recognized that many are beginning with a hybrid approach, which will give those districts time to build confidence in their systems. Commissioner Levine acknowledged the uncertainty of this virus has created concerns and questions for teachers, administrators and parents, and noted, “As health commissioner, when I weigh the health risks against the educational, developmental, social and emotional risks for young children, I come to the same conclusion as the pediatricians and education experts: now is the right time for Vermont to re-start in-person learning.”

An Executive Order will be signed and issued this week to officially set this universal start date.

[Click here to view the full press conference.](#)

[Click here](#), or see below, for a transcript of Governor Scott’s remarks.

[Click here](#), or see below, for a transcript of Commissioner Levine’s remarks.

[Click here](#), or see below, for a transcript of Dr. Bell’s remarks.

[Click here](#), or see below, for a transcript of Secretary French’s remarks.

Governor Scott Transcript: Seven weeks ago, Dr. Levine, Secretary French and I spoke at a **[press conference](#)** and set a clear goal: To return to in-person instruction for our kids in the fall.

Municipal Regulation of Bars and Restaurants

[Racial Equity Task Force \(Executive Order 02-20\)](#)

[Amended and Restated Executive Order No. 01-20](#)

Declaration of State of Emergency in Response to COVID-19 and National Guard Call-Out - Amended and Restated

[ADDENDUM 1 TO AMENDED AND RESTATED 01-20](#)

Extension of State of Emergency Declared March 13, 2020

[ADDENDUM 2 TO AMENDED AND RESTATED EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 01-20](#)

Directives

[Directive 1 - Continuity of Education Planning.pdf](#)

[Directive 2 - Childcare For Essential Service Providers.pdf](#)

[Directive 3 - Department of Motor Vehicles Suspension of In-Person Transactions.pdf](#)

[AMENDMENT TO DIRECTIVE 3](#)

[Directive 4 - Department of Liquor and Lottery - Delivery and Take-Out of Beverage Alcohol - Amended March 20, 2020.pdf](#)

[Directive 5 – Continuity of Learning Planning .pdf](#)

The Legislature has adjourned until Tuesday, March 24th. The State House will be closed during the adjournment. All staff except essential security and IT personnel will work remotely. Please direct questions to the Office of the Sergeant at Arms, via email using the provided link, in case of emergency call Capital Police at 802-229-2275, please call to try until you receive an answer.

legis.vermont.gov



[Watch legislative committees](#)

At the same time, we recognized how unpredictable this pandemic is, and the anxiety it can and has caused. So, our planning included remote learning and hybrid models as alternatives.

These approaches were in our [guidance for schools, issued on June 17](#), developed by a large group of health and education experts and stakeholders including experts from the Department of Health and Agency of Education, NEA members, the Superintendents Association, Principals Association, Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators, and most importantly, pediatric infectious disease experts.

Our core principle throughout has been to give guidance that helps school districts find safe ways to provide every child with an education that is as good or better than before the pandemic.

As you just heard from Dr. Levine and Dr. Bell, as well as other public and pediatric health experts, including some who are also parents of school-aged children, they encourage in-person instruction, especially for kids 10 and under.

I often talk about the importance of “listening to the experts, and the science” so to be clear, Dr. Levine and Dr. Bell, alongside Dr. Kelso and Dr. Raszka, [who spoke on this issue a few weeks ago](#), are experts on the potential for spread in our communities and in school settings. They also recognize the negative social and developmental consequences of not having in-person instruction.

These experts have also looked at studies from countries that have put kids back to school, our experience with childcare centers and summer camps, and the capacity we have built to contain clusters and outbreaks.

With this knowledge, they continue to recommend kids be in school in areas like Vermont, with a low number of cases, and who have the ability to quickly contain the outbreaks when they do occur.

Even Dr. Fauci has recognized the importance of opening our schools in areas with low positivity rates.

This is why we put an emphasis on opening for in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible, especially for younger students and those with special needs.

But, at the same time, we have to recognize – and plan for – the reality that our data could change before the start of school and the other reality is, we’ll continue to see cases of COVID-19 in Vermont and will also see some in schools.

We also know there is not a “one-size-fits-all” plan for our hundreds of schools because each are a bit different. As well, due to our state school structure we must also respect the local decision-making process.

This is why the guidance was developed to encourage flexibility with three primary options: First, full remote learning, like what we did in the spring, but hopefully much better. Second, a hybrid model, offering a mix of in-person instruction and remote learning. Or third, full in-person learning.



How to contact me:

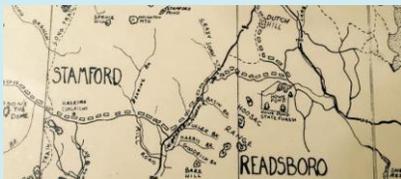
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Regional Resources

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[BDCC - Regional Development](#)
[WRC - Regional Planning](#)

Now as district plans roll in, we're seeing many, but not all, starting with the hybrid model with kids being in-person only a few days a week. But there are others offering full in-person instruction.

While Vermont's data, the science, and the expert advice would allow for more in-person instruction than many schools are currently planning, I understand the need for caution and the need for school staff, parents and children to ease into this to gain confidence.

Just like we've turned the spigot slowly in our economic restart, it makes sense for some to start with this more conservative approach.

Beginning with a hybrid model gives school staff and parents time to test the waters and work through some of the stress and anxiety that exists in a situation like this, where we know things could change, and we need to be nimble.

Because whichever option a district chooses, it will be new and different, like this hybrid model, and we want schools to take the time to get this right so students can hit the ground running.

With that in mind, I'll issue an Executive Order later this week, setting Tuesday, September 8 as a universal start date for students. We'll also work with the Legislature to change the requirements of the school calendar to give districts greater flexibility.

This will give schools one-to-two additional weeks to work with staff, test the systems they've built, and fine tune them if needed.

School districts, school boards, teachers and administrators should take this extra time to make sure they – and their hybrid and online solutions – are ready and effective, so we can deliver for our children, and build confidence in the public education system's ability to be flexible and responsive because faith in the system is key to returning to in-person instruction.

Faith in our ability to contain clusters when they pop up is important too. That's why we've worked hard to build up a testing and tracing system that can surround and contain clusters and outbreaks before they become widespread.

Because, again, the reality is we're going to continue to see cases and it's possible some could involve a school, but we have an incredible and proven team that's ready to act quickly to contain them.

Now, I want to be clear: None of this is ideal, but it's our reality and I know anxiety is high, even while the health data and expert's clearly support in-person instruction. And I can assure you, we will not hesitate to act to protect our students and school employees.

Fortunately, Vermont is in a much better position than most other states. In fact, we're probably in a better position than any other state in the country right now to return to school – an opportunity to do what's right for our kids and families because of how successful Vermonters have been in limiting the spread of this virus.

Businesses are invited to join BDCC for this week's Resiliency Webinar Friday at 2:15. Please send questions in advance by emailing bdcc-covid-questions@brattleborodevelopment.com Direct link: <https://zoom.us/j/781064798>



State Resources for COVID-19
[Department of Health](#)
[Department of Labor](#)
[Agency of Commerce](#)
[Department of Motor Vehicles](#)
[Department of Taxes](#)
[Department of Public Service](#)
[Secretary of State](#)
[Veterans Affairs](#)
[Department of Children & Families](#)



VT Helplink
Alcohol & drug support center

You aren't alone <https://vthelplink.org/>



Need help paying your Medicare premiums? Need help paying for prescription drugs? If you have lost income you may get more help with Medicare costs and drug costs. Contact the Vermont Legal Aid Health Care Advocate at 800-917-7787 or HCA@vtlegalaid.org for free help. More info here: www.vtlegalhelp.org/health

While this pandemic has created countless challenges and obstacles, we owe it to our kids and their parents to provide them with the best possible education, preferably in-person, or a hybrid system that allows them to easily toggle between the two.

Now, I know this won't be easy. But I have faith in educators who have a big challenge before them but, also, a huge opportunity to help teach our kids about the value of being flexible, creative and resilient.

And we know they are 100% committed to giving our kids the high-quality public education they deserve.

-END-

Health Commissioner Mark Levine, MD, Transcript: Based on the trends we've been seeing for some time now, I continue to believe we've come to a point in our response to this virus that allows us to bring our children back to school – in a carefully considered, measured and safe way.

I was just quoted in yesterday's [Vermont chapter of the AAP's press release](#) calling for schools to prioritize in-person attendance for preschool through grade five and for students with special needs and stand by my statement of one week ago: "In Vermont, this is the right time to open schools. We have achieved a stage of viral suppression that will allow us to open schools comfortably."

To be clear, if we were in Arizona, Texas, Florida or countless other states, we would not be having this conversation. We would likely be planning a fully remote school year.

[At our press conference 10 days ago](#), Dr. William Raszka, UVM pediatric infectious disease specialist, and I again reviewed the data supporting our conclusions that: 1) younger children are less likely to transmit the SARS-CoV-2 virus, become infected, or develop severe disease; 2) that adults in a family are more likely to be the index case in an affected family, not the child; and 3) school-based studies from around the world have not shown significant transmission of COVID-19 within schools. Multiple European countries who have gotten disease transmission to low levels like Vermont have enjoyed great success in reopening their schools. And it is the youngest children up to age nine who are not only at lowest risk but stand to reap the most benefit from the in-person learning environment, as I am sure my pediatric colleague will speak more to.

Of course, there are risks. As health commissioner, when I weigh the health risks against the educational, developmental, social and emotional risks for young children, I come to the same conclusion as the pediatricians and education experts: now is the right time for Vermont to re-start in-person learning.

We in public health hear your fears and understand your concerns. Over the past few months, we've been learning from education leaders, school districts, administrators, teachers and staff – and we've been hearing from parents – about their specific concerns, pros and cons and considerations that must be made in planning for return-to-school, and have been adjusting our public health and educational guidance – which has been out for six weeks – accordingly.



Have you taken the Census?

If you have not completed your census yet, now is a great time. You can complete it without leaving home or coming in contact with another person. There are three simple ways to complete the Census:

- Online: Go to www.2020census.gov. Can't find your 12-digit code that you received in the mail? No problem. Just follow the instructions and you will still be able to complete the questionnaire online.
- By Phone: Call 844-330-2020 to get started in English. The 2020 Census can be completed by phone in 14 different languages.

Regardless of how you respond, your answers will be kept confidential. Every employee takes an oath to protect your personal information for life and the U.S. Census Bureau cannot release any information that identifies you individually.

As of Wednesday, April 8, Windham County had the second lowest census response rate (24.9%) in the state, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The results of the 2020 Census will help determine how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding flow into our community, county, and state

We know that one plan will not fit all, and schools are customizing their solutions to fit their specific needs. The three principles that have guided us in planning for return-to-school are to: 1) give every child a quality education; 2) allow for flexibility as the situation evolves, like every other aspect of this COVID pandemic; and 3) look for and share innovative solutions.

When I say now's the time, it is in recognition that our guidance was drafted based upon the health data as it currently looks, knowing it could change. I don't mean that we will not see new cases, clusters or even limited outbreaks in our communities. But there are public health protocols in place for handling any such event – as we have demonstrated over the months with our capacity to limit the spread of disease through testing, tracing, interviewing and advising those who have been in close contact and possibly exposed to a person with COVID.

When there are cases, the Health Department will inform communities about what is happening, without compromising the health privacy of individuals.

And, as we are heading into flu season, there are bound to be rumors, misinformation and coronavirus scares swirling around in schools. Please know that the Health Department, the Agency of Education and your local schools districts are committed to telling parents and communities the truth about what is happening, and what actions schools, teachers, staff, parents and students should take in order to protect everyone in the community. And please, this year more than ever, take advantage of early immunization with flu vaccine for yourself and your family.

The virus is not going away. But with the continued support of Vermonters and visitors, we can continue to keep transmission of the virus to a minimum – by wearing a mask when out and about, maintaining social distance from others not in our household, washing hands frequently, and staying home and away from others when we're not feeling well. We must model this behavior and teach our children these practices – in school and at home.

-END-

Dr. Rebecca Bell, MD, MPH, FAAP, Transcript: [Yesterday the Vermont Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics put out a statement](#) calling on school districts to prioritize in person attendance for all students preschool through grade five and students of all ages with special needs.

In the statement, we summarize the data around transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in children as well as the importance of in-person learning for children's academic, social, and developmental needs. Our hope is that this summary of the current data can be useful for schools in their current planning for reopening and for schools who have already announced their plans as they periodically reassess the situation as the school year progresses.

An enduring motto in my profession is that "children are not just little adults." As we learn pediatric medicine, it's tempting to think that children have the same anatomy and physiology as adults in just smaller packages. We learn instead that their physiology is unique in the way they respond to illness and that their bodies and minds

every year for the next decade. This money means better health care, schools, roads, job opportunities, housing assistance, disaster assistance and more. With so much at stake for Vermonters, every response counts!

Brooks Memorial Library Staff are available to assist the public in accessing the Census questionnaire. Call 802-254-5290 ext.1206 or email info@brookslibraryvt.org for assistance. For more information on the 2020 Census, visit: www.2020census.gov.

PPP Forgiveness Webinar

A daily webinar hosted by the SBA Vermont District Office to discuss Paycheck Protection Program forgiveness

- Monday – Friday, 9:00am – 10:00am
- [Join online](#)
- Join by phone: (202) 765-1264; Code: 237511921#

PPP & EIDL Webinar

A twice-weekly webinar hosted by the SBA Vermont District Office to discuss the Paycheck Protection Program, the Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Advance, and information about updates to these programs

- Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00am – 10:00am
- [Join online](#)
- Join by phone: (202) 765-1264; Code: 470177937#

“PPP: There’s Still Money Available” Archived Webinar

The Department of Economic Development hosted a [virtual town hall](#) to share updates about the Paycheck Protection Program.

- [Archived webinar](#) (from June 5th at 2:00pm)
- [Download presentation \(“PPP Loans for Self Employed Individuals”\)](#)

have vastly different needs than adults, in times of illness and in health, hence the need for the field of pediatrics.

All of that plays a role in what we’re talking about today: That we should be thinking about children and schools and COVID-19 in a different way than we’re thinking about other aspects of community reopening during this pandemic. And to get even more granular, we should think about younger children differently than we’re thinking about adolescents.

Thankfully, young children who are typically the most susceptible to respiratory viruses seem to be the population that does the best with SARS-CoV-2. They are less likely to contract the virus, less likely to become seriously ill, and less likely to transmit the virus than adults or older adolescents. That combined with the fact that this is the same population that struggles the most with remote learning, makes prioritizing in-person education for our younger students a sensible goal here in Vermont.

Children and families depend on schools for more than just education. We can and should have a conversation about the outsized role our public-school system plays in holding our communities together and whether we as a society place appropriate value on the work educators do (we don’t). But that is the reality we are currently faced with. As pediatricians, we miss working with educators to provide comprehensive services to families. We are worried about kids. I don’t have statewide data to share on the secondary impacts of this pandemic on kids and families. I can tell you from my experience and the experience of my pediatric colleagues that children and adolescents, especially the vulnerable, are really untethered right now. They are not doing ok. The loss of structure and routine, and consistent adult presence, and social and emotional connection has been really upending. I know that educators know this too, which is why they are working hard to get back to some semblance of routine and structure and connectedness this fall. We appreciate their efforts.

If I could choose only one mitigation strategy with respect to school safety, it would be to keep community transmission low. What happens in the schools is a reflection of what’s happening in the community. The data we have now suggest that schools will most likely not be a main driver of transmission in this pandemic. They will instead mirror what’s happening in the community. We keep schools safe by keeping communities safe. So, while school officials are working hard on their plans to keep teachers and kids safe inside school walls, we have an even bigger burden to bear as members of the community in keeping positivity rates low. That means wearing a mask, following travel guidelines, keeping physically distant and staying home when sick.

Lastly, I want to address the very real and valid reactions of confusion and distrust that exist from the mixed messages in response to this unprecedented and devastating pandemic. The national conversation around school reopening has raised legitimate concerns from teachers and families. That’s because much of the country is not at a place where they can safely reopen schools. But Vermont is uniquely poised to be moving towards in-person learning because our case positivity rates are so low and because we are using science to guide us. I ask Vermonters to take their gaze off the national scene and look towards our local leaders, those who

know our communities best, and trust that they will provide the best guidance and most importantly, adapt the guidance in response to evolving evidence as needed.

On a personal level, I am a pediatrician and a parent with two young children who are thriving now that they are back fulltime at their early childhood education center. I watched their center reopen, almost two months ago now, under the guidance of the Health Department and that process has been very reassuring to me. As the president of the Vermont chapter of the AAP, I have frequent meetings with national pediatric leaders and heads of other state chapters and those conversations have only reinforced my belief that the work that's being done in our state, by our Health Department, has been done with thoughtfulness, with care, with intentional collaboration, with a willingness to adapt and change in response to local data, and always with an eye towards keeping our communities safe.

To summarize:

1. Kids are less likely to contract, get seriously sick from, and transmit the virus than adults. Younger kids even more so than adolescents. This is the same population that most benefits from in-person learning.
2. Schools are a lot of things to a lot of people. Schools are where our children are educated but also where they receive nutrition, developmental and mental health support, and community connection. Kids are not doing okay without those things. Schools also play a critical role in addressing racial and social inequity.
3. Vermont's low rates of community transmission is exactly why we are talking about in-person learning. Keeping community transmission rates low is the key to keeping our schools safe.

We all want to do what is best for children. As we continue to work collaboratively towards schools reopening, I hope that the consistently reassuring Vermont data can help schools in their reopening and periodic reassessment plans.

-END-

Education Secretary Dan French Transcript: Coming into August, the anxiety levels around reopening schools have increased as school staff and parents alike contemplate the uncertainties around reopening schools for the fall semester.

These uncertainties remain despite our planning at the state level and the hard work of implementation that is now occurring around the state in each school system.

My household is not immune from this anxiety. As I work in a corner of a bedroom to plan and coordinate the state's education response to this emergency, my wife, a veteran elementary school teacher, is at the dining room table making preparations for her classroom.

I believe our uncertainty and anxiety about reopening schools is not caused by inadequate planning, but rather the fact that none of us alone can fully control or predict how the virus will behave in the future. This lack of control, particularly for those of us accustomed to being in control, is unsettling.

What we can do is pay attention to the science, keep our assumptions realistic and use our best judgment. To be successful, we must be flexible and be prepared to respond to what is happening, whether or not it fits into our plans, because our plans are just today's best informed guess of what will happen in the future.

That being said, we have learned a lot about this virus, and we know what works.

We have learned that if everyone person does what they are supposed to do in terms of wearing a mask, washing their hands, staying home when sick and social distancing, that, together, we can have the opportunity to safely reopen our schools for in-person instruction.

I say we can have the opportunity to reopen our schools because one of the main reasons we are able to contemplate reopening our schools in Vermont is that as a state, we have adopted a disciplined approach to managing the virus and have achieved a high level of its suppression.

If these conditions were different, our plans to reopen schools would look totally different. Our plans put stock in our proven ability to continue to manage the virus together as a state.

Our plans to reopen schools include:

- Measures to prevent the virus from entering the operational perimeter of a school district by mandating all students and staff complete a daily health check and requiring sick students and staff to stay home;
- Implementing stringent precautions inside a school such as the wearing of facial coverings to stop the spread of the virus if it does enter a school; and
- Provisions to manage symptomatic students and staff during the school day.

These plans acknowledge we will likely have positive cases in our schools among students and staff. This is a hard reality to accept but it is the reality. If we can continue to maintain the high degree of suppression in our larger society, however, we can minimize the likelihood of positive cases emerging in our schools.

The bottom line is that if the virus is in our communities, it will be in our schools. We all have to do our part to reopen schools by suppressing the virus in our communities.

Reopening schools is not just the work of teachers and school administrators. To safely reopen our schools, everyone must wear a mask and do your part.

We are building some flexibility into our instructional plans by allowing districts to utilize in-person instruction and remote learning and some combination of the two – what we are calling hybrid learning. This flexibility will be necessary to navigate changes in the public health conditions, but also necessary for our schools to reopen and to stay open.

Based on my experience as a teacher, a principal and a superintendent, I know that school district operations are fragile

from a logistical standpoint and highly dependent on human labor since education is fundamentally a humanistic endeavor. In spite of our best plans, schools or certain grades in schools might have to close for lack of staff such as teachers, bus drivers or paraeducators.

The decision to give school districts the flexibility in choosing among in-person, remote or hybrid instruction is an operational necessity if we are going to maintain schools being open. And it is important that we strive to keep schools open since the stability of school activities are vital not only to our students but also to our communities.

In the coming weeks, we will continue to focus our efforts at the Agency on supporting our school districts in this work. We will be minimizing the publication of new guidance in favor of supporting the implementation of the guidance we already have.

We do have a few pieces of guidance that are in the works, notably guidance on sports which will be published in the coming week or so, and guidance on student supports, including guidance on special education and social and emotional support systems.

Reopening our schools will require each community to follow state guidance and apply it in their unique settings to create local solutions that best meet the needs of their students. We cannot direct specific implementation solutions from the state level since we cannot anticipate all of the local factors.

We can, however, trust in the professional expertise of our educators to do what is best for all of our students. At the state level, we will work closely with school districts to support them in this work, and to collect data on what is working well so we can identify opportunities to share these ideas more broadly across the state. And for our most vulnerable students, we will work with districts to ensure these students have the supports they need to be successful.

This is uncharted territory, and I acknowledge there is a considerable amount of uncertainty and anxiety. I am confident we will be successful, however, if we can follow the science and trust in our own expertise and resourcefulness.

Starting school after Labor Day gives us a bit of extra time to make these preparations. Let's take advantage of this time to make sure the new school year can be as successful as possible.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions, or if you need assistance navigating government services at (802) 384-0233 or lsibilia@leg.state.vt.us. Follow my regular posts online at <http://www.laurasibiliavt.com>

Kind regards,

Rep. Laura Sibilias
Dover, Readsboro, Searsburg, Somerset, Stamford, Wardsboro,
Whitingham



URGENT CENSUS: Second homeowners, Property Managers and Realtors:

Help us pave the roads!

Federal and state transportation dollars are allocated according to population. This requires an accurate federal census. The 2020 Census response rate is currently 44.4% for Windham County, 48.8% for Bennington County. In our towns with large second home populations, the response numbers are extremely low.

As our town and state officials scramble to improve these response rates, we need your help!

There have been some questions about how 2nd homeowners should respond to the Census. Here's the guidance.

If you live at multiple places throughout the year, count yourself at the address where you live and sleep most of the time. If you split your time evenly between two or more places, count yourself where you were staying on April 1, 2020. However, a census response is required from each and every property.

For any property you own but only use part of the time, follow these instructions:

1. Visit www.my2020census.gov
2. **Enter the Census ID or address for this secondary property**
3. **Enter "0" for the number of people living at this property**
4. **Hit Next, and when a "soft error" occurs, click Next again**
5. **Select "No" when asked to confirm no person lives at this property**
6. **Select primary reason – Seasonal (most likely)**
7. **Complete!**