



*Jim Justice*  
*Governor of West Virginia*

August 17, 2021

Sam B. Petsonk, Esq.  
Post Office Box 1045  
Beckley, West Virginia 25802

Mr. Petsonk,

This Office is in receipt of your letter dated August 16, 2021. We appreciate your thoughts on the State's response to COVID-19, and welcome you to continue to express your thoughts on any platform you may choose.

As to the State's response to COVID-19 and the policy decisions being made, the Governor will continue to rely on his team of experts to assess conditions, research all aspects of the disease and measures being put in place around the globe, and make recommendations based upon their various fields of expertise. You certainly possess political ambition, but to my knowledge are not an expert in medicine or health, epidemiology, vaccine development, logistics, strategic planning, or any other area that may be a useful base of expertise from which to make sound recommendations to the Governor.

I will note that last year, little was known about the disease and health experts and researchers the world over were learning exponentially more about the disease and potentially helpful mitigative measures daily. Most importantly, last year, the vaccination only became available in adequate quantities late in the school year. The vaccine has been available to children 12 and up for four months now, and has been available to the adult population for months longer than that. The focus, as it should be, is on getting our people vaccinated for the health and safety of all of us.

As you likely know, the Governor's policies and policy-making have been challenged a number of times over the course of this pandemic. The Courts have consistently, and resoundingly, held that the Governor rightly has discretion to seek advice and recommendations from his veteran team of experts as to the State's response to this novel coronavirus and its variants, and to craft policies that will do the most good for the State and her people.

We do not believe entering into dialogue with you on these matters will benefit the students of this State. Rather, the Governor will continue to rely on his experts to advise him and make recommendations regarding the health and safety of students throughout the State, as well as all other populations that make up our great citizenry. Obviously, you are free to pursue any course you think appropriate. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Brian Abraham  
Chief of Staff