FORUM TOPIC REQUEST

Each Board Member may request two forum topics per meeting; **use this form for one topic.**

TOPIC: Establishing a Working Group on Pandemic Preparedness for Fairfax County Public Schools

Time Sensitive ☐ **Yes** ☒ **No**

Desired Date/Time Frame and Reason: When board meeting scheduling allows

BOARD MEMBER NAME: Ryan McElveen | **Date Submitted: 03/25/2026**

1. **Specify topic's relation to Student Achievement Goal, Operational Expectation, or policy:**

   Strategic Plan Goal 2: Safe, Supported, Included, and Empowered: Goal 2: Safe, Supported, Included, and Empowered: Prioritizes mental/physical health, attendance, positive school climate, and student voice.

2. **Objective of the topic/conversation:**

   Having recently experienced the first debilitating pandemic in a century, Fairfax County Public Schools finds itself at a critical juncture where institutional memory and hard-won experience remain within reach. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed significant gaps in our collective ability to create evidence-based policy that minimized harms to our school-age population. The pandemic produced wide-ranging and well-documented negative effects on children — among them significant learning loss, social deficits, and a rise in chronic absenteeism that persists to this day. Whatever inequities existed among various demographic groups of children before the pandemic were only deepened. As a system, we have not yet formally outlined what we learned from that experience.

   FCPS is uniquely positioned to act now, while those who navigated the pandemic response firsthand are still on staff. Senior leaders including the former deputy superintendent, chief of staff, chief academic officer, and chief equity officer bring direct institutional knowledge of the decisions made during that period of crisis and uncertainty — the pressures faced, the information available, and the tradeoffs considered. Within Fairfax County's government, many of the key decision-makers — particularly the director of health as well as numerous Supervisors — also remain in office. Rather than allow that knowledge to dissipate over time, we have an opportunity to convene a structured working group that captures these perspectives alongside input from school communities, health professionals, and other stakeholders. FCPS can lead the nation by example in undertaking a thoughtful and collaborative review.

   I advocate for establishing a staff-level working group charged with developing actionable recommendations for how FCPS should respond to future pandemics and return to the Board for a work session discussion with its recommendations in fall 2026, ensuring that these lessons are preserved, examined, and translated into lasting institutional improvements before the moment passes. This working group would provide recommendations for system policy, assess what evidence-based frameworks should be consulted, and produce concrete guidance to improve outcomes for our students and staff in any future public health crisis.

3. Desired outcome:

   a) ☐ Forum discussion only
   b) ☐ More information/report from staff
   c) ☐ Refer to committee for recommendation
   d) ☐ Refer to a work session
   e) ☒ Other

Other: Establishing a staff-level working group on pandemic preparedness