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**For Immediate Release**

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**Health Officer Serves on Governor's COVID-19 Return to Learn Advisory Council**

Yesterday, Governor Gretchen Whitmer announced a group of 25 leaders in health care and education to serve on the COVID-19 Return to Learn Advisory Council. The group of experts includes educators, parents, and students who will work closely with the governor as she continues to put the health and safety of our students and educators first.

Our very own Health Department of Northwest Michigan and Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department Health Officer, Lisa Peacock was among those appointed to this advisory council.

"I am honored to represent the voice of public health and northern Michigan on this committee. Our region has unique strengths and challenges which need to be considered in planning and I'm looking forward to working together with educators, parents and students to inform the development of a safe and effective return to school plan", shared Lisa Peacock, Health Officer of Health Department of Northwest Michigan and Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department. "In public health, we recognize that graduating from high school is one of the most important determinants of future health and it is critical that our Michigan students have an equitable opportunity to successfully achieve this milestone."

The Advisory Council was created to identify the critical issues that must be addressed, provide valuable input to inform the process of returning to school, and to ensure a smooth and safe transition back to school. The Council will act in an advisory capacity to the Governor and the COVID-19 Task Force on Education, and will develop and submit recommendations to the COVID-19 Task Force on Education regarding the safe, equitable, and efficient K-12 return to school in the Fall. This group is prepared to carefully examine the data and consult with experts to help determine what is best for our kids.

The Return to Learn Advisory Council will recommend actions to remove statutory and administrative barriers to delivering education before Phase 6 of the MI Safe Start Plan and help develop and improve systems for academic support for students who experienced learning loss during the Spring/Summer 2020. The Council must report regularly to the COVID-19 Task Force on Education on its activities and make recommendations on an ongoing basis.

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