Mike Beranek

ISEA President

2:00 PM Press Conference

August 19, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Mike Beranek and I am the President of the Iowa State Education Association.

The ISEA represents public preK-12 educators, education support professionals, community college faculty, Area Education Agency professionals, retired educators and aspiring educators in Iowa.

Thank you for joining us today as we announce our next steps in the fight for the health and safety of Iowa’s students, educators, school employees and our communities.

Since March, the safety of our members and the students they serve has been our number one priority. From advocating last spring for the closure of school buildings and making sure members were paid the ISEA has been there. Through it all, we have never forgotten what our number one priority is – the health and safety of our school communities.

It seems some have forgotten that priority which is why we are here today.

As educators, we are responsible for safeguarding the health and safety of our students. When educators enter a school building, they are signaling that it is safe for students to enter as well. It is a tremendous responsibility and one we can no longer ensure given the current guidelines in place.

The ISEA has long advocated for proper measures which outline health and safety procedures which are based on real science and health that must be in place before we can advocate for the safe return of in-person learning. We believe those closest to the communities should be the ones making those decisions.

Just this week we learned the Iowa Department of Public Health has mislead us with bad data, incorrectly recording COVID tests skewing positivity numbers statewide and more specifically skewing positivity numbers in our school districts. It is unconscionable – and clearly demonstrates that a 50,000 foot view of this pandemic isn’t capturing what is happening locally.

Today, the ISEA and the Iowa City Community School District has filed a lawsuit against the state of Iowa to immediately declare local school districts -- not the Governor - have the authority to make local decisions affecting the health and safety of their schools.

Please join me in welcoming Brady Shutt, President of the Iowa City Education Association, and Jay Hammond, ISEA’s Associate Executive Director for Advocacy Services as we discuss the lawsuit.