CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

David Murphy
Superintendent of Schools
135 Berkshire Street • Cambridge, MA 02141
dmurphy@cpsd.us • www.cpsd.us

To: Cambridge School Committee
Fr: David Murphy
Date: 11-17-26

Re: School Committee Agenda Item 26-233 (Wellness Policy)

As you know, included in tonight's agenda are revisions to the district's Wellness Policy. As I noted in your update last week, under state law these revisions are developed in part through the work of a Wellness Advisory Council, which in Cambridge is composed of representatives of both the Cambridge Public Schools and the Cambridge Health Alliance. As usual, CHA has been an outstanding collaborator and thought partner with CPS throughout the formation of the proposed policy amendments.

Several committee members have reached out with questions about elements of the revised policy and the consolidation of the existing Policy ADF and Administrative Implementation Guidelines. **In part due to those questions and in part due to specific elements of the recommendations that I do not feel comfortable asking the committee to review or consider at this time, I am rescinding my recommendation that you adopt this policy.** I apologize for the confusion and any inconvenience this has caused and would respectfully request that the policy be referred back to the administration so we may reconvene with the Wellness Council before bringing more optimal language before the committee at a future date.

At this time, I do not believe there are any elements of our existing policy or practices that are inconsistent with state or federal mandates. There are some instances in which we need to and will tighten practices to ensure full adherence to current policy and best practices, i.e. appropriate communication with CHA school nurses staffing CPS schools about potential allergens at school events or in classroom activities. But the language itself of our current policy does not actively contradict other mandates.

Finally, with respect to the provisions around recess time: While the existing wellness policy intentionally omits specific minute mandates, CPS internal guidelines continues to direct at least 30 minutes of recess for preschool and Kindergarten students, at least 25 minutes of recess for elementary school students and at least 20 minutes of recess for upper school students. In surveying schools this fall, it seems as though there are very few examples in which we are falling short of these targets (and in several instances we are exceeding these minimums). There are a few specific exceptions at upper schools involving specific grade levels on specific days of the week in which there is slightly reduced recess time attributable to co-located elementary students being understandably prioritized with regard to the use of recess space. Even in those instances, however, we are actively working to determine what logistical modifications could be made to in fact increase the time students are able to spend enjoying unstructured, recreational and/or social engagement related activities, ideally outside.

If the committee is amenable to referring this back to the administration, we will continue exploring those opportunities to prioritize this important portion of the school day and will report in the first half of 2027. Again, I apologize for the draft that was attached to the committee's agenda being published prematurely and before it was ready for your consideration. Thanks.