



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

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The Office of Communications releases the following statement from Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak, bishop of Grand Rapids, regarding the State’s legal challenge to withhold CARES relief funds from private schools:

On June 30th Governor Gretchen Whitmer released the MI Safe Schools Roadmap, which outlines safety protocols to guide schools in their in-person opening for the new school year. At that time, she had this to say:

“I’m committed to providing you with the guidance, support, and clarity that is needed to safely bring students back to the classroom for in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. In doing so we will continue to put safety first, leveraging science, data, and public health evidence to inform the decisions we make to serve each and every student in Michigan well. Today, I signed an executive order and released the MI Safe Schools plan to provide a structure to support all students in Michigan as they plan for a return of K-12 education in the fall.”

On July 7th, the Governor counteracted her own words when she, along with the state attorney general and the state superintendent announced a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Education. The lawsuit seeks to withhold COVID-19 federal relief funds from Michigan students who attend nonpublic schools. What a difference seven days can make.

This “about-face” is remarkable. Governor Whitmer has pursued an aggressive, highly-detailed, COVID-19 approach to curtail the spread of the virus and to protect the public health of Michigan residents. She has stated on numerous occasions that the coronavirus does not discriminate. But now she has singled out a class of Michigan citizens—nonpublic school students, teachers, administrators, and other personnel—who should not qualify for the CARES (Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security) Act funds available from the federal government.

You can catch the coronavirus in a store, bar, fitness center, and yes, a school. The Department of Education wants the federal funds distributed to keep all kids and teachers safe in every school, public and nonpublic. Why doesn’t Governor Whitmer want equal protection from the coronavirus for the Michigan citizens who work or study at nonpublic schools?

The Governor has urged us to be in this together. Agreed! **Let’s protect all Michigan students and teachers and not be selective about it.**

The Diocese of Grand Rapids serves more than 191,000 Catholics, 80 parishes and 31 schools in an 11-county area of West Michigan. For additional information visit our website grdiocese.org. Connect with the diocese on [Facebook](#) (Diocese of Grand Rapids), [Twitter](#) (@GRDiocese), and [Instagram](#) (@GRDiocese).

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