



HARBOR BEACH
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
402 S 5TH ST HARBOR BEACH MI 48441 989 479 3261

May 1, 2020

Dear Friends,

There are times in life where it can be difficult to find hope, positivity, and even unity. Some would say we are deeply in the midst of a time precisely fitting that description. I would offer that this as an opportunity for us. We have an opportunity, should we wish to see it, an opportunity to show the very best of who we are and who we aspire to be. In challenging times there are paths to choose from, paths allowing us to lead with hope, refusing to accept blame mongering, and aspiring to promote unity while striving to see higher levels of goodness possible within us all.

A great number of things have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. It has challenged our hope. The suspension of face-to-face instruction and the limitations on gatherings have a “ripple effect” that is felt in many ways. These things make us question hope. Yet let me promise you, our district and our students will survive. We have worked to teach students anything is possible with hard work and hope, and they have proven over and over that they have listened. We are plenty strong enough and certainly have the will power and determination required. We have hope for better times to come. If nothing else, as educators and leaders for our children, we must aspire to provide hope.

Two traditional events significantly impacted by this “ripple effect” are Prom and Graduation. We have tried our best to consider all options, and we have delayed specific decisions desiring further clarity as to where, when, and to what degree we can gather safely. At this point in time, there are still numerous and important unanswered questions. We continue to struggle to find the balance between waiting too long in making a decision and providing information prematurely. Having said those things, we do have additional information for you about both Prom and Graduation, and we trust you understand there would be no answer that absolutely worked for everyone.

We are rescheduling Prom for Saturday, July 25. It is now clear May 9 is impossible due to current limitations on safe group gatherings. Restrictions based on availability of venue, conflicts with community events, and time for specific planning lead us to July 25. High School staff will be communicating out specific information soon. Things like start time, tickets, decorating, etc. will be coming soon. Please know there is still a possibility for Prom being canceled completely. The difficult reality is if we are unable to hold Prom on July 25 due to continued limits on public gathering size, it will likely be canceled. Though we hope it will not be necessary, we feel an obligation to be truthful with you. There is a point where Prom may simply not be possible; for now we plan for July 25.

The current Stay Home, Stay Safe order expires on Friday, May 15. Our graduation is currently scheduled for Sunday, May 17. Whether the government agrees to extend that order or not, we think you'd agree it will be extremely unlikely we will be allowed to gather nearly 1,000 people just 2 days after a possible lifting of the executive order. We continue to feel our seniors deserve a full graduation with all the pomp and circumstance that goes with it. The cumulation of 13 years of education brings with it the privilege and right to celebrate. Therefore, we are rescheduling graduation for Sunday, June 14, at 1:00 p.m. To be fair, it does seem moving from our current restrictions prohibiting even small group gatherings to allowing hundreds to gather by June 14 could be unlikely. If we are not able to



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gather in large groups at that time, we will reschedule for Sunday, July 26, at 1:00 p.m. Unfortunately, it is possible that large groups will not be able to gather even in July. If, as we approach July 26 this seems to be the case, we will consider other future dates and reschedule appropriately.

I hope you will understand these are unprecedented times and bring with them challenges with no perfect answers. We struggle greatly with each of these decisions, and as difficult as they are to make, we must make them. We hope for your understanding that each decision is made with the best intentions. As mentioned earlier, we have chosen to take the path of hope, positivity, and unity. We hope you will choose to join us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dr. Shawn Bishop".

Dr. Shawn Bishop
Superintendent