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September 3, 2021

Citizens of Amherst County:

Over the past few days, our County has endured trying times. We have had quarantines, school closures, and uncertainty. We have lost friends to COVID or complications from COVID. As we are living in a politically charged environment, this letter is to ask you to each do your part to help our community get through this.

ACPS has closed down all schools at the request of VDH. Rumors have sense circulated regarding who is to blame. As parents, we all want to know who exposed our kids and, ultimately, who turned our lives and routines upside down. Rumors are rampant. I can say with certainty most of the rumors are wrong and reckless, but we are still spreading them as if they are true. This causes the potential for bullying or otherwise harming our youth. Please stop sharing unsubstantiated rumors.

Today, I ask you to focus on the facts. I ask you to focus on safety and healing. I ask you to focus on our children's need to be educated. I ask you to focus on helping our community find its way back towards "normal."

In regards to the spread of COVID within the schools, I have been asked, "What is the Commonwealth's Attorney doing?" This is a fair question and I am confident that people don't know the answer. You typically only know what I do if you are a criminal defendant or a victim. To a lesser extent you might know what I do based on being a witness to a crime or possibly a juror.

My office is responsible for prosecuting all criminal matters in Amherst County. This ranges from speeding tickets to murder. My office is proactive and we voluntarily get involved with far more than is required by statute in order to better serve Amherst County.

To charge someone with a crime you must have probable cause. Probable cause is based on evidence and not rumors or gossip. To win a case in court, I must prove all of the elements beyond a reasonable doubt which is the highest level of proof we have in our judicial system.

Many have called on me or our Sheriff, to charge the person or persons involved in this spread with a crime. First, if the accused is a juvenile you will NEVER know if they are charged. The misdemeanor charge would not be online, the court system would only use initials, and the juvenile's identity would be protected. Second, many of you suggest crimes that you THINK

they could be charged with. I cannot charge based on what people believe the law should be, only what the law is.

One example that has been mentioned several times is the crime of intentionally infecting another person with a disease. The Commonwealth of Virginia Statutory Code does have that charge. It is §18.2-67.4:1 Infected Sexual Battery. However, this code is limited to sexual acts and is also limited to three diseases: HIV, Syphilis, and Hepatitis B.

The ACPS Superintendent is committed to putting out accurate information free from political influence. Please look for Dr. Arnold's releases to the ACPS website or Facebook. Please listen to your individual school's administration as they release information that directly applies to the individual schools. Please do not get your "truth" from Facebook rumors. Most that have been brought to my attention are clearly false but being parroted by people that I know, like, and trust as if they are true or at least potentially true.

I can assure you that we are diligently working to understand what happened, to safely reopen our schools, and to prevent future outbreaks. As such, we will work with the schools, health department, law enforcement, and anyone else to do our part to help our community get through this. Please call or email me with questions. I am your Commonwealth's Attorney. I represent Amherst County. Let's work together and come through this stronger.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Lyle Carver', with a stylized, cursive script.

W. Lyle Carver