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February 24, 2020

Dear Alumnae and Friends,

It is with a deep sense of sadness that we, the Benedictine Sisters of Elizabeth, regretfully announce the closing of Benedictine Academy in June 2020, effective at the end of the current academic year.

Over the last few years we have been monitoring enrollment and have seen a steady decline each year. Unfortunately, these circumstances are part of the larger national decline in Catholic Education which has led to the closing of more than 1,000 elementary and secondary schools in the past ten years. Urban dioceses have seen a 27.5% drop in enrollment in Catholic elementary schools nationally; previously there were fifteen Catholic elementary schools in the City of Elizabeth, and currently there are only two schools remaining in the city.

Without these grammar schools, and those in neighboring towns, sending freshmen to the local Catholic high schools the number of students attending parochial high school has generally declined. Benedictine Academy had a total of 174 students enrolled for the 2014-2015 academic year, based on current 9th grade registration we are projecting that we could potentially have 115 students enrolled for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Benedictine Academy is a 1950's building with an annex that was only to be used for a few years, but which has been in place for over 20 years. We have done our best to make needed repairs and upgrades to our facilities, but due to the school's limited financial resources, not all of them could be addressed. Our low enrollment for the past few years has resulted in a deficit at the end of each fiscal year. It is now evident that we cannot continue to function effectively or efficiently while we continue to steadily erode our limited resources.

Please know that Benedictine Academy will continue to operate as usual through the remainder of the academic year. The School Administration, Faculty and Guidance Counselor will be available to provide assistance and support to our students and their families as we make the necessary arrangements for them to successfully transfer to other schools.

We want to personally thank all of you who have graciously and thoughtfully supported Benedictine Academy: the families who believed in our mission and entrusted their daughters' education to us; Ms. Ashley Powell who said "yes" to assuming the role of Principal and led the school during these challenging times; the dedicated and hardworking Administration, faculty and staff; and our faithful and generous alumnae, other donors, and our Advisory Board of Trustees.

Together we leave a lasting legacy of educating and empowering young women for the future - many of you are those women. We should all be very proud of the significant impact Benedictine Academy has had on Catholic education and on generations of women.

Sincerely,

Sister Mary Feehan, O.S.B.

Sister Mary Feehan, OSB
Prioress, Benedictine Sisters

Sister Sharon McHugh, OSB '67

Sister Sharon McHugh, OSB
President, Benedictine Academy

Eileen A. Moran

Eileen A. Moran '72
Advisory Board of Trustees