

Dear Legislators:

Please consider this brief testimony in favor of LC21.

The COVID-19 health crisis is beyond anyone's control. Its cause, treatment, epidemiology and threat status are poorly understood. No one has a clear answer what to do about it, and any policy undertaken in its wake comes without guarantees, and with heavy risks. Under such circumstances, individuals must be allowed the freedom to decide for themselves what and how much risk to take. And individuals must hold each other harmless for the outcome.

There is only one certainty in this health crisis, and that is that indefinite school closures add further harm to an already dire situation. Children are the lowest-risk group in terms of COVID morbidity, but have the most to lose from isolation and hopelessness. As the mother of a disabled high school senior who has lost not only the disability services on which she relies but also all social connections that her school provided, I ask you to please consider that LC21 shows the way out of this insult-to-injury situation:

--Allow individual families to decide whether to send their children to brick-and-mortar schools or attend online studies.

--Allow individual school employees to decide whether to return to brick-and-mortar work or take reassignment to online schools.

--Exempt schools and districts from COVID-19-related liability, and offer families and employees who wish to return to the brick-and-mortar environment to do so after signing a liability waiver.

--Offer promotions and pay raises to younger, lower-risk education workers willing to return to brick-and-mortar work during the health crisis.

--Offer early retirement or online-academy reassignment to older, higher-risk education workers who do not wish to incur the risk of returning to regular work.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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