

Dear Mr. Chairman, Vice Chair, and Committee Members -

I write to you as a mother of a middle schooler and a high schooler (both of whom play competitive sports), a daughter of a long line of educators, and a concerned Oregonian.

Let me start by saying that I do not envy the position you are in but faced with the data and science that is clear now, there is no other decision that can be made – the schools must be opened, and student athletes must be cleared to play competitive sports (all sports).

I am strongly in favor of safely reopening the schools and allowing student athletes to compete.

At this point the Governor and the Chief Medical Advisor to the President are strongly recommending the reopening of schools therefore anything but allowing this to happen is unacceptable including buckling under pressure from labor unions. I strongly recommend that this Committee firmly urge Governor Brown to **MANDATE** the opening of schools (all grades) and competitive sports (including football and other contact sports). Simply *ADVISING* is no longer good enough.

An unimaginable set of consequences are already taking place and will continue to get worse if schools are not open and competitive sports are not played:

- Emotional and mental distress on the students/athletes (short-term and long-term effects) – this includes suicide, teen pregnancy, neglect, lack of healthy social development, etc.
- Increased diversity gap.
- Raise in dropout rates or parents pulling their kids from public schools therefore threatening the viability/strength of Oregon’s already stressed school system.
- Lost opportunities (scholarships) of deserving students to further their schooling which will lead to lost wages, health benefits, etc., which will then lead to a whole other set of long-term effects.

“15 Skills Athletes can Transfer from Sport to the Working World” - credits to believeperform.com:

- Teamwork
- Communication
- Growth and Development
- Emotions
- Tenacity
- Coping
- Resilience
- Leadership
- Learning
- Determination
- Pressure
- Concentration
- Commitment
- Goal Setting
- Motivation

All these skills are the very things these students and athletes have learned to prepare them for the last 10 months of setbacks. They have done what we have asked and taught them to do. It is now up to you and the rest of the governing body to let these kids get back to these especially important learnings so that when/if they are faced with unimaginable challenges again, they can cope with the dignity and resiliency they have during this crisis.

Excuses such as lack of vaccines, buses, PPE, reluctance from teachers /union, etc. should not be tolerated. Furthermore, having young drivers and parents travel to other states to compete is not only dangerous but simply does not make sense and could end up being a liability to the state. Also pushing the blame back on the community for not following guidelines and therefore the reason that schools are not open, and sports aren't allowed is like saying it is someone's own fault for dying of cancer, heart attack, etc.

"Resuming youth contact sports too soon would put communities across Oregon at risk. In the meantime, the best way we can all work together to bring back youth sports in Oregon is to drive down the spread of COVID-19 by continuing to wear masks, maintain physical distance, avoid indoor social gatherings, stay home when sick, and get vaccinated when it is our turn." - Charles Boyle, Deputy Communications Director to Gov. Brown

This is a very short-sided statement from the Governor's office.

The state government needs to clearly **MANDATE** that schools open and competitive sports resume.

Please do the right thing so that Oregon is not the next to end up in a headline like this "Surge of Student Suicides Pushes Las Vegas Schools to Reopen" -

https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/24/us/politics/student-suicides-nevada-coronavirus.html?smtyp=cur&smid=fb-nytimes&fbclid=IwAR33d-iEXLlqhmbif9ctk5yZVC_rnyvq-fJXPjOmpipTaSNOIEV4v6a-QB4

Here is a powerful list of associations who have said schools should be the LAST to close...

CDC -- "CDC recommends that K–12 schools be the last settings to close after all other mitigation measures have been employed and the first to reopen when they can do so safely." https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7003e1.htm?s_cid=mm7003e1_w

European CDC -- "There is a general consensus that the decision to close schools to control the COVID-19 pandemic should be used as a last resort." <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/children-and-school-settings-covid-19-transmission>

WHO -- Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of the WHO, told an online press briefing that given the "devastating consequences on children... the decision to close schools should be a last resort, temporary and only at a local level in areas with intense transmission". <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/schools-should-close-last-resort-insists/>

UNICEF -- "We call for schools to be the last to close and first to reopen when it is safe to do so. Shutting down schools should only be considered when there are no other alternatives."

<https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/press-releases/schools-should-be-last-close-and-first-reopen>

Hospital for Sick Children- Toronto, Canada -- “When considering public health measures aimed at curbing community transmission of COVID-19, it is our strong opinion that schools should be the last doors to close and the first to open in society. The current school closures need to be as time-limited as possible.” <https://torontosun.com/news/provincial/new-sickkids-report-warns-of-significant-harms-of-school-closure?fbclid=IwAR1fNr6mKR4bX7-gih2QNGyp68lpRoBzxS73vMYuUTJ7LvtO61mklSxfjs>

Dr. Scott Gottlieb (previous FDA commissioner) -- Schools should be the “last thing” shut down as governors and local officials around the U.S. weigh further public health restrictions in response to surging coronavirus cases <https://www.cnn.com/2020/11/20/dr-scott-gottlieb-schools-need-to-be-the-last-thing-shut-down.html>

Dr. Ashish Jha (Brown University School of Public Health) -- “Schools should be the last thing to close and the first to reopen,” he said in an interview Tuesday with the Journal. “From a public health point of view, please don’t close schools before you close restaurants, bars and casinos.” <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/education/2020/11/24/dr-ashish-jha-schools-should-last-close-covid/6413945002/>

UCSF Healthcare Professionals -- “Following the lead of many European and Asian countries, we believe that California schools should be the first sector of our economy to reopen and the very last to close.” <https://www.sfexaminer.com/opinion/ucsf-health-professionals-call-for-february-1st-school-reopening/?fbclid=IwAR0NG7TrC3XgixkW2CMB8W6PyYftYOb-9HdF3lRvwTHzqhQuJENeAmF33wY>

Emily Oster (economics professor at Brown University) -- “Schools should be among the first to open, and last to close” <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2020/11/16/emily-oster-schools-should-be-among-first-to-open-and-last-to-close>

NYTimes -- If community prevalence rises to unmanageable levels — a likely proposition, given the surge in most states — even elementary schools may be forced to close. But that should be a last resort, after closures of indoor restaurants, bars, bowling alleys and malls, several experts said. “I still say exactly what many people have said for the past few months — that schools should be the last thing to close,” said Helen Jenkins, an infectious disease expert at Boston University. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/14/health/coronavirus-variant-schools.html?referringSource=articleShare&fbclid=IwAR1Plke8GAS8XSg-CbBz1bhCmhisGxapDRNvSGOnQ19I5kOZwSNuZDLMkI4>

In addition, here are several articles on how over 35 states have been able to successfully (with minimal to no COVID spread) resume competitive sports, including contact sports.

UW Study: High School Sports Have Not Spread the COVID-19 Coronavirus - https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/education/local_schools/uw-study-high-school-sports-have-not-spread-the-covid-19-coronavirus/article_3b04400a-7651-50df-a2ff-

[01a71bf4db65.html](https://www.sportsdestinations.com/management/health/covid-19-wisconsin-high-school-athletics-study-sum-19625) AND <https://www.sportsdestinations.com/management/health/covid-19-wisconsin-high-school-athletics-study-sum-19625>

Playoff Continue; Testing shows lower positive cases among high school football programs - <https://www.fox13now.com/news/coronavirus/local-coronavirus-news/playoffs-continue-testing-shows-lower-positive-cases-among-high-school-football-programs?fbclid=IwAR1sUrnUOyOMyh90nRyTjaplzi3EQfkwbxXI0uPpK3EWjh526VM6kYP9mo>

The Statistics Behind Why We All Need to Start Acting Like High School Athletes in Fight Against COVID-19 – https://www.ksl.com/article/50050165/the-statistics-behind-why-we-all-need-to-start-acting-like-high-school-athletes-in-fight-against-covid-19?fbclid=IwAROSEQBWyNF-HzAKqSUZz0i3EY7zJMO_h5gKFvaR2JgVzFHEDnntK3jYDjg

Please also take a moment to look at this info graphic out of California – <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10226537956181646&set=p.10226537956181646&type=3>

It is time to see and support the benefit outweighing the risk. Please **MANDATE** that all schools open (regardless of grade) and competitive sports resume immediately.

Thank you for your time,

Kari Naone
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