

We stayed silent when schools were closed and our kids were abruptly sent home - the virus was new, we were all scared, and we didn't know what it was. We stayed silent throughout the ensuing months as we gathered data and learned what COVID is. We now know a lot more about COVID and we can no longer stay silent about the outsized price being paid by the children of Oregon. We've heard from Dr. Fauci, the CDC, the European CDC, the WHO, UNICEF, American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Scott Gottlieb (previous FDA commissioner), Dr. Ashish Jha (Brown University School of Public Health), and the UCSF Healthcare Professionals that schools should be the last institutions to close and the first to open. Science is solidly behind schools reopening, we need the policy to follow.

Our red state neighbors opened too quickly and too haphazardly without the right safety measures in place, but even they have done better than expected, in some cases, much much better. Their case rates are typically as low as or lower than the surrounding community spread. The stance to keep schools closed is now the stance that ignores the current science and is driven off unfounded individual fears. It is the responsibility of policy makers to rise above these politics and do what's right for the larger community.

Every day matters for kids. They do not have the same sense of time that adults do. My own kid has every advantage – at home learning in the company of a CPA mom and computer science dad, but even he is not ok. These kids are not ok. They are in their formative years when interaction with their peers, especially for some age groups, is not a nice to have. It is absolutely critical. For those not as lucky as my kid – kids born to distracted, addicted or abusive parents – kids like I was – we all know they're been suffering on a massive scale. History will look back on what we do now. Now that we know that this virus can be contained safely with careful measures and that science has clearly endorsed kids being in school. Did we advocate for the least powerful in our society or did we bend to the will of the powerful and organized?

Concerned parent and citizen,

Jennifer New