

To: Senate Committee on Education

As a third generation Oregonian, and a father of 3 school aged children, I am writing to your committee, to implore you to reopen all Oregon public K-12 schools immediately. Our children have not seen the inside of a classroom for nearly a year, a year without in-person teacher contact, a year without libraries, a year without structured physical exercise, and a year without the social and emotional impact of friends, a year without sports.

Our schools were closed via mandate by Governor Brown, and literally overnight, the parents of more than 500K K12 students had to "Figure it out". We had to figure out childcare, we had to figure out how best to protect our vulnerable children, parents, grandparents. We then had to "figure out" the initial "distance learning" that was the disaster of spring 2020. Chromebooks, internet, space for each student to learn, all things we as parents had to "figure out".

We are now nearly a year away from classrooms, and CDL continues to be difficult for both teachers and students. As part of a student "pod" I get the honor of assisting family members by watching over my nieces and nephews. The youngest in kindergarten, shows the biggest struggles. This is a young boy who has NEVER set foot in a classroom, has NEVER met his teacher in person, and is EXPECTED to sit behind a chromebook and learn.

I would like the Senate Committee on Education to work with Governor Brown to MANDATE the return to schools by March 1st, 2021. In addition to this mandate, the ODE RSSL needs to be updated to include larger cohort sizes, and smaller - per student square footage requirement. These two requirements are still causing many students, especially those in MS and HS the inability to return, due to the logistics of how those classrooms and schools operate.

Finally, we have come to a crossroads with teachers and their respective union representation. The sole mission of public schools is to educate children, and not the employment of teachers. If teachers, who have had nearly a year to return to the classroom with kids, cannot figure out how to make their own childcare work, or how to make their own safety work, then maybe it's time some of them to resign, so our children can return to the education they deserve, and we as taxpayers pay for.

Sincerely,

Mark Brenden
Mt. Angel, Or