

I am the parent of a PPS 5th grader. My 11-year-old daughter is suffering greatly from the social isolation caused by the pandemic and school closure. She is extremely depressed, cries almost daily, is physically inactive (despite my efforts to get her moving), has lost interest in things that normally bring her joy. **She tells me that she wants to die.** She misses school and her friends. This is a truly desperate situation for our children.

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 and we need the policy to follow.

I understand the decision to close last March when the pandemic was new. I understand that schools not posing a risk of spread is counterintuitive. But, we are now making decisions with life-long impact on students' lives based on fear - not science. I beg you to make science-based decisions. The students in this state depend on you to make science-based decisions.

The harms of keeping schools closed are dramatic and increasing. As private schools open, and they will, the educational disparities so many public school children already face are going to grow exponentially.

While getting teachers vaccinated early is a laudable goal, we cannot make opening our schools contingent on it. You have no control over when that will happen - it is still very unclear how long it will take to get teachers vaccinated. More importantly, **schools are open safely without vaccines all over the country** - vaccines are an added layer of protection - not a precondition. Oregon is one of the last in opening schools, despite being one of the best states in the nation on COVID spread. It is embarrassing, and as legislators you must demand that our state do better by our children.

Thank you for considering,  
Naomi Easton