

To the Oregon Legislature:

I understand the fear involved in reopening school, but that fear is no longer based in science. Studies from North Carolina to Sweden have proven that open schools do not contribute to community spread, nor does it endanger teachers. Medical experts all over the world agree that schools are safe to open, and schools have been successfully open in most other states.

I have 1<sup>st</sup> and 6th-grade students at a small charter school within PPS, while my husband and I both work full time. Because we cannot possibly navigate distance learning for both our children and still keep our jobs, we have employed our former nanny to facilitate a learning pod with our first grader and some other kids at her school. Her public education now costs us \$1200 a month. While we are incredibly privileged and fortunate to be able to do that, unfortunately, I know many other families who don't have the money or the resources. How can they choose between their children's education and well being and providing for their family?

My first grader has Noonan's Syndrome. It's a genetic mutation that causes many issues, one of which can be learning disabilities that according to her doctors, usually present themselves around the 1st and 2nd grade and early intervention will be key to helping her get where she needs to be. While her teacher has already noticed that she is behind in her reading and writing, I can't imagine or expect her needs to be fully evaluated or addressed in a distance learning environment. She has issues with her kidneys, digestion, and two heart defects. In her short life, she has undergone three different surgeries, two for her heart and one for her spinal cord. Despite this, after speaking with her cardiologist, her neurologist, her endocrinologist, her gastroenterologist, her nephrologist, and her pediatrician, we have zero qualms about her safety and sending her back to school, and neither do any of those physicians.

Our 6th grader has ADHD. This has probably been the hardest for him academically and emotionally. If you know kids with ADHD, many of them have serious problems with screen time addiction, and ours is no exception. We have had to have strict limits on screen time for many years, and our biggest nightmare is handing him unfettered access to a Chromebook and expecting him to stay on task. Without personal interaction, his focus is almost non-existent. We don't go through a week without several days of tears in our house, and he feels very isolated from his peers.

It is unconscionable that our children's social, emotional, and educational needs are not being met out of a fear that is not based on science. I urge you to open schools immediately, and also strive to educate those still fearful with the mountain of scientific studies now available showing that schools are the safest place to be during this pandemic. To help you with that, [this google doc](#) fully references many of these studies.

Sincerely,

Heather Bowden