

Good afternoon,

I am a mother of three school-aged children. I've also become an advocate for reopening our schools. Safely. But with urgency at all levels.

I'm not going to debate the science here. It is so overwhelming the harm the continued shuttering of our schools is causing, and that they can be safely reopened now. Even without a vaccine.

You will undoubtedly get emails from teachers and the OEA. Whatever they say in those emails, they have also come out and publicly said school is not safe and should not reopen until kids are vaccinated. So not only are their demands sensational and unreasonable, it is hard to follow them because they are constantly shifting based on what best fit their desires in the moment. The vaccine isn't available for children, their risk from the virus is less than riding in a car or having the flu. It is unreasonable to keep schools closed past the time educators are vaccinated. It has been shown it is safe to proceed without teacher vaccination, but since this is being made a priority now, a concession could be made for this.

Governor Brown needs to mandate that schools reopen to in person learning at all levels once teachers have been offered vaccinations.

We are not against teachers. We love our teachers. We want them safe. I myself have three family members who are all public school educators in Texas and have been teaching in person since the Fall.

The Teachers Union is standing in the way and making unreasonable demands. Remember as you read their submissions that they have a union. Remember they have little direct incentive to return to the classroom.

Remember kids do not have unions or lobbyists. Neither do their parents. Remember that while no child in Oregon has died of Covid, many have died by suicide, one in our school district this last month. Remember that there is scant evidence that any teacher or staff person across the country has contracted Covid AT school.

Manufactured fear in aid of ulterior motives should not trump sound science. Schools have opened successfully and epidemiologists, scientists, doctors and the CDC have said that schools should be reopened.

The governor set a goal of returning to in person by February 15. As of today, most schools across this state are nowhere close to achieving that. And to the extent they are motivated, they are being stonewalled by calculated demands designed to not return teachers to the classroom for the foreseeable future. Then there are small schools and charter schools that are in school starting this week in the same counties where the larger districts are still closed, this is inequality at its finest.

The public education system may not survive this. I and many other parents are looking at Private options for in person instruction. We are grateful we have the resources to go to private school and be in person, however we would prefer to continue with Public education if there is a reasonable plan for reopening for all levels.

You mandated that schools close nearly a year ago. Trust me, most schools will not reopen until you once again mandate they reopen. Absent such a mandate, the unions will continue to block the way.

And the ones harmed are the children. Who have no say. And no power. And who have already yielded a year of their lives for the sake of others.

Remember them. Fight for them.

We also need all extracurricular activities to be allowed as they are in almost all other states. These activities are vital to the health and well-being of our youth. No one is required to participate so those that don't feel safe can opt out. But the overwhelming majority are ready to opt in and have determined that the risk is an acceptable risk based on their risk profile.