

To: Oregon Senate Committee on Education

My name is Charley Wolff, I live in Halsey, OR. I have two children in the Oregon K-12 Public Education System, I am an EMT and Firefighter for our local Fire Department, and I have parents and in-laws over the age of 65 who live in Oregon. It has come to my attention that you are taking public testimony regarding reopening Oregon K-12 Schools for a hearing on Wednesday January 27, 2021.

Our Oregon K-12 students need to return to in-person instruction. Governor Brown placed teachers ahead of the older community to receive COVID-19 Vaccinations, and there is no reason why teachers should not be teaching students in person after receiving the vaccine. They will not only receive the vaccine, but also continue to have COVID-19 Safety Protocols in place (such as masks, hand-washing, and frequent sanitization).

It is alarming to me that as a Committee you might question whether or not students should return to school when:

1. There is reliable evidence that shows students are not super spreaders of COVID-19.
2. Our students need to be back in the classroom receiving the education they are entitled to as well as the education the tax payers are paying for. Their education and mental health and well-being are crucial to the future.
3. The Governor prioritized teachers over elderly (which includes my father who has diabetes, and my father in-law who had a heart surgery). Both of these men along with many other 65 years and older citizens are on continued restriction and risk as they wait for the opportunity to receive the COVID-19 Vaccine. Let me be clear, each of those individuals and many others I have spoken to want their grandchildren back in the classroom (their wellbeing matters to them). However, if teachers are being prioritized over the older generation, then there should be no reason why teachers do not go back to in-person instruction.
4. Lastly I want to share a growing concern I have for teachers who have been teaching our Oregon students from locations outside of Oregon. For example, teachers teaching from Palm Springs, CA or San Diego, CA because they have traveled there to "vacation" while they teach online. Some teaching from the local mountain slopes while skiing. What message does that send to students, parents, and tax paying citizens. I guess if teachers feel comfortable traveling outside of the state or being in crowded locations, they should feel comfortable teaching in the classrooms.

Please honor those who have had to wait to receive the COVID-19 Vaccine by opening up Oregon K-12 Schools.

Sincerely,

Charley Wolff  
Halsey, OR