

Hello,

I'm writing to urge the committee to prioritize the health and safety of all Oregonians when considering school reopening plans. I am a parent of a 2nd and 4th grader in public school as well as a school district employee - speech language pathologist at a public school. Until more recently, I have felt that my safety and my family's safety were in good hands with the decision making by our government here in Oregon. However, I feel that lately our governor and ODE are caving to the pressure of a loud minority of parents who are out of touch with the dangers that face all Oregonians. Cases are still high in our state. We are working on getting people vaccinated. Why would we consider reopening schools NOW? Kids who are doing distance learning are safe at home. Educators are safe at home. I know that some kids are struggling, but as an educator I know that there are ALWAYS kids who are struggling even when we were in-person. At least the kids are alive! Their parents and grandparents are being kept safer and alive by keeping kids at home.

I have seen incredible things happening during distance learning at my school. As a speech pathologist, I am seeing my large caseload of students over Google Meets and we continue to make genuine connections together, have FUN together, and my kids are continuing to make terrific progress on their speech and language goals. My own children miss their friends and regular life, but their teachers are doing incredible things to keep them learning and progressing this year.

Please do not rush to open schools before it is safe. Please consider the impacts that reopening schools will have on the families who will NOT have a choice to continue distance learning if schools open in person before it is safe.

Thank you,
Katie Lee
Portland, OR