

Dear Senate Committee on Education,

I write to you today as a special education teacher and parent. While distance learning can't hold a candle to a rich in-person educational experience, it has been an amazing alternative to keep families and educators safe during a global pandemic. With vaccines arriving, now is not the time to cave to pressure to reopen schools. It is true that not all students are thriving, just as it was true when we were in-person as well. As a special education teacher, I know that I am not able to reach my students to the same degree, but some are thriving, and most families are thankful to be safe and healthy. As a parent, my own children are having varying degrees of success with distance learning. My child with anxiety is thriving and loves it, while my more social middle schooler misses his friends and struggles to pay attention to online classes.

Going back to a hybrid model is NOT a return to school. It is a completely different experience that does not replace what so many children are missing, the social/emotional aspect of school. Please do not endanger our students and families to rush back into a sad imitation of school.

Thank you,

Kathryn Johnson