

Dear Honorable Senate Committee on Education Members:

As a parent with two students in the Beaverton School District, I urge you to support reopening schools for in-person learning. My boys are in sixth and third grade. My youngest has special needs. Since this will be in public record as testimony, I do not want to disclose a lot of personal information, but I will say that despite the best efforts of his teachers most of his needs cannot be met virtually. I worry that the longer he and his peers with special needs are required to do CDL the more skills they will lose and the further they will be behind. Due to lack of in-person interaction with peers at school and sports my oldest has struggled significantly as well.

My husband and I work full-time. We are fortunate to have jobs that we can do remotely, and we have a safe and stable home environment, which I know is more than many. If we are struggling this much, I can only imagine the hardships other families and students are dealing with during this on-going crisis.

While the immediate closure of schools made sense early in the pandemic, it is well beyond time to start the reopening process. Per state guidelines, districts were able to provide at least limited in-person instruction to individuals that need it most since the beginning of the school year, but most have not done so. Public health officials and medical professionals now have a better understanding of the virus and how it spreads and said repeatedly that schools can reopen safely, with proper protocols in place, for in-person learning. In fact, a recent [viewpoint piece](#) in the Journal of the American Medical Association, CDC officials state that there “is little evidence that schools have contributed meaningfully to increased community transmission” and Dr. Fauci has [said](#) that schools can reopen safely, even when there is significant community transmission. Many schools in other states and countries have reopened successfully and safely. However, despite Governor Brown moving teachers up in the priority list for vaccine distribution, many teacher unions say that is still not enough. According to statements made by leadership of the Oregon Education Association and local teacher unions, the unions appear to keep moving the goalposts for reopening as they claim that in-person learning is still not safe until their families, students, and entire communities are vaccinated. That is simply not realistic, especially considering vaccines are not yet approved for children (nor do we know they will be in the future). In the meantime, as negotiations seem never-ending many students are without in-person services and supports they need. Again, many schools have already reopened before vaccines were even available. Naturally, there is risk involved with any in-person activities during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, decisions need to be based on current science and data which is in favor of reopening.

I appreciate your time and consideration during this very difficult time for all.

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