

Dear Senators and Staff,

Please reopen schools for high school age children

They don't have time to make up for the lost years

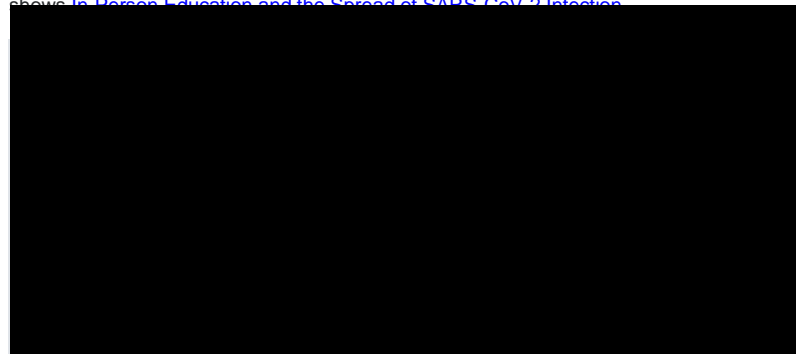
Please do not take my input as any illusion that I can fully understand the multitude of gears you are trying to align right now. And while I sympathize with the stress and chaos the pandemic has imposed across the world, I wish to convey the struggle that feels very urgent on the home front.

My son is a Junior in High School with a 4.2 GPA who dreams of going into one of many prestigious engineering programs in the US, a year from now. He's joined clubs, Swim team, Water Polo club, Mock Trial, Robotics team. He's enjoyed volunteering and community service outreach. He studied for 6 months for the SAT, flew to Idaho (the closest open test site) and humbly earned a 1570 on the SAT this Winter. While his reclusive nature lends itself to the comfort of his devoted cat, his teen boy bedroom and learning outside the social stresses of in person school, even he recognizes the disadvantage he has in optimizing his high school experience. Especially in contrast to other high school students across the country. I'm a 12 year veteran of the Air Force, so we've accumulated many friends across the country. To see old friends in MS, TX, GA, ID and UT and more completing in sports, traveling to debate competitions and mock trial. There is a helpless heaviness in him that we cannot console. A sadness that he has devoted so much to be his very best, and this close to the finish line, he's falling behind by no fault of his own. He's fully aware that he is competing with these same friends across the country for coveted college admissions, and the playing field does not feel even anymore. Family friends have offered for our children to move to their states, enabling our children to get back to a more normal life. But my husband and I felt the amazing teachers we have met along the way, and Oregon's progressive, science based actions in the past, would bring our children back to school soon.

My husband and I are front line health care workers, taking pride to do our part in serving our community and patients through the entire pandemic. By following CDC guidelines and our company leadership, we see work places adapt to meet the needs of those we are honored to care for and comfort. I view the calling of education very similarly. And while I understand a need for online only learning, before there was more data to show us and guide us, I don't think that argument still stands. Many other cities and states across the US are showing us it can be done safely. Surely the safety of families, teachers, staff and liability concerns are similar in those many other communities where school has been prioritized and in person learning is up and running. Our plight is not unique. But our leadership and example can be. Somehow, perhaps unfairly, I believed our educational institutions would step in front and compassionately, coherently, capably follow science and offer in person learning. Let's be an example to our children, our most valuable resource. Is it fair to defer their learning with the belief their educational needs are being met, without any objective assessment? Comparing GPA's to previous years, or sending out adapted online OAKS testing versions to contrast objective comparisons to prior years. With such a long deferment of in-school learning, the children deserve assessment to assure families that their children's academic needs are being met. Especially at the high school level where they have limited time to recover.

I'm a product of BSD, a veteran of the Air Force where I became a physician and returned home to raise my children in this wonderful city. And with my Air Force friends (and other family members out of state) offering to take my children in to live with them, just to help them maximize their education and reach their academic goals. I'm saddened, ashamed and regretful. How can Oregon justify such educational disparity?

We can do better, and our children certainly deserve better. There is copious data across the country and the world, showing us that in person school can be done safely. That is why the American Academy of Pediatrics, OHSU Doernbecher, the CDC has provided guidelines and the amazing Dr. Fauci himself have all recommended in person schooling for all ages. One of the latest update out of JAMA shows [In Person Education and the Spread of SARS-CoV-2 Infection](#).



Infection

This Viewpoint from the CDC summarizes global data about SARS-CoV-2 outbreaks at K-12 schools and emphasizes imp...

I fully recognize that the view from my kitchen table is narrow, and yes, even insignificant. You have so many perspectives to consider and weigh. But please do not overlook the voices of those you are intended to serve and protect. The children of your schools, who don't have a microphone or union to represent their interests.

Thank you for your time and consideration. And I wish you and your family health and wellness as we traverse this ever challenging season.

Sincerely,

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