

To the State Senate,

My name is Carly Voigt. I am a Middle School Special Education Teacher in West Linn Wilsonville School District. I have just returned from maternity leave and I am so scared. If I don't return to work, our family will lose our health insurance; an impossibility in this COVID-time. I have a 5 month old baby at home who has yet to have the full rounds of her typical vaccines, which medical professionals say increase her immune system- a necessity since she is unable to get the COVID vaccine at her age. And then, there is my 5 year old, whom we've kept home for the last 11 months to protect herself and our family. We have watched her suffer, without social interaction, to complete online school with frustration and self-doubt, just as you and other parents have watched.

Now, in the pressure of our state and a portion of our community, we will throw away all of this suffering and safety precautions to jump back to in-person schooling when the numbers of cases are at the highest and a new, more dangerous strain was just introduced to our country. This is not only heart-breaking, but unsafe, unintelligent, and lacking the guidance from our nation's medical professionals.

To go back to in-person schooling now, even in a hybrid model, defies the very struggle we've been working as a nation to endure for the sake of decreased numbers. In all other states, districts go back to in-person schooling only to be sent home periodically with illnesses spreading- costing family members their lives.

As a special education teacher, I know how the CDL model does not best serve all of our students. I also do not think parents realize how the Hybrid model is planned to unfold- in order to stay safe- will be a grave disservice to their education. Hybrid model means that my special education students will be required to keep 6 feet distance from me, keep their masks on, remain in their seated, taped-off, boxed-out desks for the entirety of their 'learning'. Eat at their desk in a classroom and not socialize with other students. Their lives and the lives of their loved ones, are more important than going back to these standards.

Do we forget, in our thirst for normality, that this is still a pandemic? These are still unprecedented times. They are not optimal learning experiences but we cannot force them to be at the cost of our community.

We want to go back to teaching- when it's safe! Safety in education means vaccination and the calculating metrics to be far lower than they are now. Just as so many mothers, who are fervently posting on facebook seem to forget- if a child showed up without other typical vaccinations and were to get others sick, these same mothers would be calling out "unsafe and unfit"- as they have in the past. Now, more than ever, it is necessary to call out: "unsafe and unfit!" Until we can all be properly vaccinated and the number of cases in our state decrease.

To quote a 7th grade student on our Equity zoom call today, "Everything is about politics; I wish it wasn't this way." I could not agree more.

In service,  
Carly Voigt

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"When a flower doesn't bloom you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower."

~Alex Den Heijer