

March 23, 2021

Dear Chair Alonso-Leon and esteemed members of the House Education Committee,

Education is the most important investment we can make in our children and in our state. Access to a quality education is the greatest equalizer, lifting people out of poverty, creating bright futures and opportunity for all.

When history looks back at the COVID-19 pandemic, closing schools to in-person learning will be viewed as a terrible and detrimental mistake. We know access to a great teacher is the best tool for a path to a successful future for our children. The closing of in-person learning to most of Oregon students for over the past year has taken a sledgehammer to equity and equality for all our students, especially those with disabilities, students in poverty, students of color, and rural our students.

Oregon student have been deprived over 524,394,900 in person classroom hours.

Hybrid and distance learning have filled some of these lost hours of in person education. Now it is the legislature's duty to figure out what deficits have been created from the loss of in-person education and how to ensure our 561,000 students have a quality education. Teachers, districts, and policy makers need to have all the tools to understand the loss of learning that have been created. I urge you to pass HB 2962 to ensure you can fill these gaps and ensure that Oregon students have a bright future.

Sincerely,

Cheri Helt