



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Education Center*

*520 N.W. Wall Street  
Bend, Oregon 97703-2699*

Dear Bend City Councilors, La Pine City Councilors, County Commissioners, Bend Police Chief, County Sheriff and OLCC:

Cc: Local Health Officials  
Newly elected officials

We write to you today as the elected representatives of our community's students and families, offering our thanks for your collective action to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community and asking you to continue and expand your efforts so that our students can go back to school.

We doubt we need to explain that our students, and their families, are suffering due to school closures. Many of you have students in our schools, but you are all likely touched by this issue, as it has a profound impact not only on students, but on our community, our workforce and our economy, as families try to meet the demands of childcare, education and work. For many of our students, including students living in poverty, students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, students experiencing neglect or abuse, and others, school is a necessary lifeline and place of safety and security. For our youngest learners, in-person instruction is critical for developing a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy. And for all students, in-person education is a critical part of a successful life trajectory - and students are losing that opportunity month after month. In addition, families who depend on school for childcare have been crippled by its cost or unavailability, affecting their ability to work and maintain their livelihood.

On the flip side, as the fifth largest district in Oregon and second largest employer in Central Oregon, we cannot send tens of thousands of students and staff back into schools with rising COVID-19 cases in our region. Oregon Department of Education reopening metrics exist for a reason and our community must develop a stronger plan to reduce cases if we want to be able to safely open schools.

This is why we are reaching out today to ask for your help and support, so that together we can change the trajectory of cases in our region.

We applaud the previous efforts of the Bend City Council and County Commissioners to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community and we call on you to revisit this issue and consider additional steps. With the input of local health authorities and based on what we know about what is causing the spread, we are requesting that the Bend City Council and County Commissioners immediately consider formal restrictions on tourism and businesses for a short period of time in order to reduce transmission of COVID-19.

Thank you to our local code enforcement and law enforcement agencies for their efforts to ensure members of the public are following these guidelines. We need your partnership now more than ever. We are asking that the Bend Police Department, County Sheriff's office and OLCC actively use all methods available to ensure that businesses and residents are adhering to current policies and guidelines, including holding businesses accountable for maintaining required physical distancing, health screening, and mask wearing and breaking up residential parties that are not following state COVID-19 restrictions.



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It is more important than ever to remember that we are one community, but with different perspectives. Now is not the time to become even more divided and divisive. We can conquer this obstacle if we come together as a community to propose a community-wide plan for getting our students back into school. We believe our intentions are aligned and we look forward to continuing to work together towards a common goal.

We request a reply from each of you and/or your entity no later than Tuesday, Nov. 10, so that we can discuss next at our Board Meeting that evening. If our local elected leadership is not unified in its desire to step up to help get our kids back in school, then we will attempt to form a cross-agency leadership group with those who are willing to develop a plan to bring to the community.

Best Regards,

The Bend - La Pine School Board

Carrie Douglass, Chair  
Melissa Barnes Dholakia, Vice Chair  
Julie Craig  
Stuart Young  
Amy Tatom  
Caroline Skidmore  
Shimiko Montgomery