



OREGON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

March 4, 2021

Governor Kate Brown
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Governor Brown,

As House and Senate Republicans, we are deeply concerned about the detrimental impacts ongoing school closures are having on Oregon students. We respectfully request that you utilize the full authority of the Office of the Governor and intervene immediately to reopen schools to full in-person instruction.

We have a collective responsibility to ensure vulnerable children receive high-quality instruction and a well-rounded educational experience. However, many students have not stepped into a classroom for nearly a year and they are feeling the academic, social, and emotional consequences. Students are falling behind academically, which is jeopardizing their futures. There is a growing body of evidence that virtual instruction is inadequate and school closures are hurting our student's ability to learn, their social development, and their mental health.

Our state's collective future depends on and demands that we not allow political considerations to get in the way of educating our next generation of leaders, innovators, business owners, and change-makers. Yet, a McKinsey & Company [analysis](#) suggests that school closures are hurting our children's future prospects. They estimate that the average K–12 student in the United States could lose \$61,000 to \$82,000 in lifetime earnings (in constant 2020 dollars), or the equivalent of a year of full-time work, solely as a result of COVID-19–related learning losses. These costs are significant—and worse for racial minorities. While they estimate white students would earn \$1,348 a year less (a 1.6 percent reduction) over a 40-year working life, the figure is \$2,186 a year (a 3.3 percent reduction) for black students and \$1,809 (3.0 percent) for Hispanics.

Students are facing challenges associated with mental health, peer suicides, and social isolation while not at school. Our kids need to be back in the classroom to have the necessary support. Last year, we saw [nearly a 40% increase](#) in calls to suicide hotlines among youth. A [recent survey](#) shows that over half of 11-17-year-olds reported having suicidal thoughts regularly.


Notably, the effects of school closures are being disproportionately felt by women, as more than 3 million have dropped out of the workforce.

In 2011 the Legislature vested the Office of the Governor the powers of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Those powers were exercised when Executive Order 20-08 was signed to shut down schools. We are requesting utilization of those same authorities and direct school districts to return to full in-person instruction with proper safety protocols.


The state was recently allocated \$499 million from the federal government, much of which was intended to get children back into the classroom. We find no reason that this funding windfall is not sufficient to reopen schools, especially when an ever-increasing body of evidence supports that it is safe – even without the vaccination of teachers.

In order to support families and give our children the best education and chance at success, we respectfully request you take decisive action and reopen Oregon schools for full in-person instruction immediately.

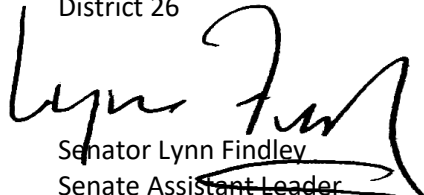
Sincerely,




Senator Fred Girod
Senate Republican Leader
District 9



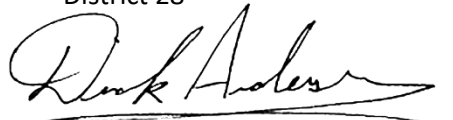
Senator Chuck Thomsen
Senate Deputy Leader
District 26



Senator Lynn Findley
Senate Assistant Leader
District 30



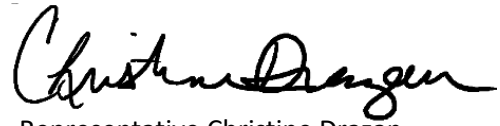
Senator Dennis Linthicum
Senate Whip
District 28




Senator Dick Anderson
District 5



Senator Bill Hansell
District 29




Representative Christine Drazan
House Republican Leader
District 39



Representative Daniel Bonham
House Deputy Leader
District 59



Representative Duane Stark
House Whip
District 4



Representative Kim Wallan
House Assistant Whip
District 6



Representative Bill Post
House Assistant Deputy
District 25



Representative Shelly Boshart Davis
House Assistant Leader
District 15



Senator Dallas Heard
District 1



Senator Bill Kennemer
District 20



Senator Tim Knopp
District 27



Senator Kim Thatcher
District 13



Representative Jami Cate
District 17



Representative Gary Leif
District 2



Representative Raquel Moore-Green
District 19



Representative Mike Nearman
District 23



Representative Cedric Hayden
House Assistant Leader
District 7



Representative Rick Lewis
House Assistant Leader
District 18



Representative Vikki Breese-Iverson
District 55



Representative Bobby Levy
District 58



Representative Lily Morgan
District 3



Representative Ron Noble
District 24



Representative E. Werner Reschke
District 56



Representative Suzanna Weber
District 32



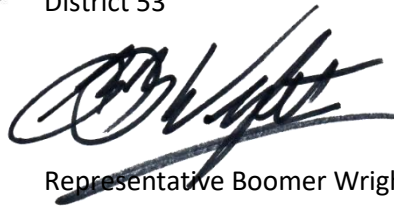
Representative Mark Owens
District 60



Representative Jack Zika
District 53



Representative David Brock Smith
District 1



Representative Boomer Wright
District 9