



September 2, 2020

We are writing today on behalf of Bring Kids Back MA, a grassroots organization of more than 2,500 parents (and counting) from across Massachusetts with a common goal: **to get our children back into the classroom.** We are a diverse group of parents and families united in advocating for our children.

Today, we are calling upon school districts across Massachusetts to **prioritize full-time in-person learning, now and for as long as community-level data shows it can be done safely.** Our children's academic, social and emotional well-being hinges on the immediate adoption of a data-driven approach designed to safely get children back in the classroom.

Governor Baker and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) recommend that school reopening plans be guided by transparent data-driven metrics related to virus levels in the community; yet, very few public school systems are offering full in-person learning for our children. Districts have not disclosed the 'extenuating circumstances' that preclude them from offering an in-person model, even with negligible rates of COVID in their communities. Further, many districts are implementing restrictions *beyond* the guidance developed by DESE in conjunction with public health experts and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

The well-being of children across the Commonwealth is at risk. Hybrid and remote learning models will not provide the quality of education our children need. Our communities will trade one set of health concerns for a greater set of physical and mental health issues, perpetuated by increased screen time, inconsistent educational development, disrupted routines and lack of in-person interaction with peers and educators. The achievement gaps between our students, other states, and those who cannot afford private school will increase even further.

It is time for a balanced approach that manages public health and safety based on the best expert guidance available, while also ensuring that our children's needs are no longer pushed aside. If we do not course correct soon, a full-time in-person return to school could be unnecessarily out of reach for children across the Commonwealth.

Respectfully and with great concern,

Bring Kids Back MA

