

Letter from Public Health Officials Calling for a Pause of School Closures/Mergers/Co-locations to Ensure Physical Distancing

May 5, 2020

Dear Governor Newsom,

Thank you for your leadership in this difficult time, and for your outstanding actions to follow public health advice for the health and welfare of the people of the State of California. We write to encourage you to extend these actions with regard to school closures, mergers, and co-locations this fall.

On April 14, 2020, you issued a statement that California plans to use social distancing in schools to avoid a resurgence of COVID-19 when schools reopen for the 2020-21 school year. The CDC's "Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs" advises to "increase the space between desks" and to "stagger arrival and/or dismissal times" in order to best implement social distancing in schools and decrease the volume and proximity of interactions. As quoted in Politico, educational experts Edgar Zazueta of the Association of California School Administrators and Keith Brown, president of the Oakland Education Association, agree that social distancing in schools will require as much facility space as possible to keep kids, teachers, and the larger community safe.

In the interests of public health, California school districts should immediately halt all plans to close, merge, or co-locate schools in 2020-21 to avoid increased density at school sites and thwart the future spread of COVID-19 when schools reopen. We also note the intensive additional stress that school closures, mergers, and co-locations pose for children and families already under high stress. COVID-19 is already disproportionately affecting communities of color—the same communities that are most impacted by mergers, closures, and co-locations. The schools that children of color attend must be made as safe as possible so as to not further endanger communities most at risk from COVID-19.

We encourage you to issue an executive order requiring school districts across the state to pause all closures, mergers, and co-locations in 2020-21 to maximize facilities so that schools can successfully practice social distancing this fall and once again serve as safe places for kids, families, and the community when they reopen.

Sincerely,
Public Health Experts

Dr. Art Reingold, *Division Head of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, UC Berkley School of Public Health*

Dr. Brad Pollock, M.P.H., Ph.D., *Professor and Chairman, Arline Miller Rolkin Chair in Public Health Sciences, Department of Public Health Sciences, Associate Dean of Public Health Sciences, School of Medicine, University of California, Davis*

Dr. Jeffrey D. Klausner, MD, MPH, *Professor of Medicine and Public Health, UCLA David Geffen School of Medicine and Fielding School of Public Health*

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Dr. Rachel Berkowitz, DrPH, MPH, *Health Equity & Implementation Science Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of California, Berkeley*

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**Support from teachers, parents, and community members
seeking to reduce risk of exposure:**

Hilda Rodriguez-Guzman *ACCE*

Nailah Franklin *BACR after school program*

Jamie Cairns *Benicia Unified School District*

Cindy Hukill *Brookfield Elementary School*

Camille Martin *Brookfield Elementary School*

Corrin Haskell *Brookfield Elementary School*

Felisha West *Brookfield Village/Columbia Garden
Homeowner Association with Soprani Park*

Belinda M. Sanders *Bella Vista Elementary School*

Jonathan *Central Unified School District*

Claire Woods *Individual*

Peggy Beasley *Concerned Parent*

Aquita Stevenson *Cox Academy Charter School*

Christina Salvin *Gavilan College*

Oscar Campos *Henry J Kaiser Jr. Elementary School*

Stuart Strickland *Hewlett Packard Enterprise*

Brad Hirn *Housing Rights Committee of San Francisco*

Jenna Flamenco *Hayward Unified School District*

Gwynne Gilson *Indivisible ReSisters*

Akemi Hamai *King Middle School*

Michael Solorio *La Familia de Stanford*

Danika Weden *Lafayette School District*

Bette Korber *Los Alamos National Laboratory*

Erika M. Guerrero *Manzanita Community School*

Patricia Rathwell *Individual*

Oscar Campos *Individual*

Tina Andres *Individual*

Sanjev de Silva *Individual*

Andrew Seko *Individual*

Jace Perry *Individual*

Sarah Tapon *Individual*

Corey Monteith *Individual*

Rachel Amsterdam *Oakland Education Association*

Kelsey Johnson *Oakland Education Association*

Sarah Willner *Oakland Education Association*

Danielle Gerena *Oakland Education Association*

Craig Gordon *Oakland Education Association*

Shula Bien *Oakland Education Association*

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Natasha Saleski *Oakland Education Association*

Amy Haruyama *Oakland Education Association*

Timothy Douglas *Oakland Education Association*

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Amelia Bailey *Oakland Education Association*

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Cristina Ramos *Oakland Unified School District*

Perla Zuniga *Oakland Unified School District*

Anderson de Andrade *Oakland Unified School
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Yesenia Montoya *Parent*

Robert J Brem *Peralta Colleges*

Kathleen be Evans *Retired teacher, Oakland
Unified School District*

Jodi Murphy *Retired teacher*

Lynda Rosenthal *Retired teacher, Oakland Unified
School District WCCSD*

Gabrielle Dolphin *Retired with grandkids*

Miko Tolliver *Rock Star Guitar Academy*

Brook Pessin-Whedbee *Rosa Parks Elementary*

Sarah Goudy *Rudsdale Newcomer High School*

Colleen Kim *San Francisco Unified School District*

Roselinn Lee *Santa Ana Unified School District*

Benjamin Vazquez *Santa Ana Unified School District*

Joey Badua *Individual*

Aly Hall *Individual*

Lisa Scheffer *Individual*

Xochitl Hernandez-Hill *Individual*

Kyle Smith *San Francisco Unified School District*

Mohammad Mustafa Popal *Skyline College*

Evan Colom Johnson *Stay at home parent*

Victoria Robles *The Walt Disney Company*

Mira Mickiewicz *Trackers Earth*

Michael Rosenthal *Vallejo Unified School District*

Michael Bakal *Voces y Manos*