

Good evening. My name is Lisa Lemmon and I am proud district employee teaching at the elementary level for 20 years. I speak to you tonight in regards to the decision you will be making for the reopening plans that affect our students and staff.

There has been an illusion created that opening schools during this Pandemic is safe. In fact, there is no scientific evidence to support this claim. According to the World Health Organization, there are no clear answers in the data collected thus far regarding children. In reality, they state, "it will take the reopening of schools for the data to form a clearer picture". As an elementary teacher, I take offense to this. I am not the lab rat of data collection to see how this plays out. My health and well-being and the health and well-being of my students is my first priority. Especially, when other countries have attempted to reopen and it was a failure. Israel had fewer than a 100 infections a day when they began their reopening process of schools. Their Education Ministry Official stated, "returning children to routine as much as possible was for their emotional and pedagogic well-being". Ten days later they experienced a large COVID19 outbreak and had to go on lockdown once again. And as schools begin to open in the US, we can see their struggles and heartbreaks. Simply look at Georgia.

We can no longer suggest that the social and emotional well-being of our students can only be catered to with in-person instruction. That is a falsehood. I am 45 years old. I am child of the 1980s. When I was little, I grew up watching Sesame Street. I not only watched it every morning but the rerun episode in the afternoon. Five year old me had no doubt in my mind that Big Bird loved me and cared about ME. He was able to achieve this through an old box TV that sat on my family room floor. If Big Bird was able to comfort and cultivate my emotional health in 1980, then I am confident my colleagues and myself can provide that same emotional connection and love, while providing guaranteed safety and engaging academics, through our live remote lessons in 2020.

I leave you with this.....We are dealing with a Global Crisis. All of humanity is facing the challenges of living during a Pandemic. It is time to stop politicizing this virus and realize that the virus is in charge. And YOUR decisions should be guided by science for our safety. If teacher safety cannot be guaranteed, then student safety cannot be guaranteed, and then ultimately the community's safety cannot be guaranteed. Do not allow even one staff member to fall ill. Reopen Only When It Is Safe.