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August 25, 2021

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To Oregon School Board Members:

Oregon’s schools have faced a mighty struggle to keep students engaged over the last 18 months. We believe we can all agree our students thrive when they can learn alongside their peers and participate in the activities that connect them to their school and community.

The pandemic has demanded strong and nimble leadership on the part of our state’s roughly 1,400 volunteer school board members. The mandates around masking and vaccination requirements have relieved some while frustrating others. We understand Oregon school board leaders have strong and diverse opinions regarding what is best for their communities. Your leadership now counts more than ever.

Oregon stands at the threshold of students returning to the classroom full time. But to ensure we provide consistent in-person instruction, a variety of safety precautions must be implemented with fidelity. These include physical distancing, proper use of face masks and most recently mandatory vaccinations for school staff, volunteers and others who come into contact with students.

While we, as your elected representatives on the OSBA Board of Directors, will always advocate for local control, we also strongly urge all school board members to get vaccinated for the COVID-19 virus. By doing so, you are modeling responsible behavior and showing solidarity with our students and staff. This support, along with your wearing of face coverings and physical distancing, will go a long way toward keeping those in the classroom teaching and learning.

The delta variant has created an alarming rise in new COVID-19 cases across the state. The majority of these new cases are affecting the unvaccinated, but even those vaccinated can be infected. Additionally, the delta variant is extremely transmissible, with each infected person spreading the virus to more than twice as many individuals than with previous strains of COVID-19. Finally, it is important to recognize that our youngest students cannot yet be vaccinated but are susceptible to and spreading the virus.

All of us need to pull together to face these challenging times across our nation and our state. We know that as school board members your focus, like ours, is on what is best for all students. Thank you for all you do for the students in your schools, and for being great leaders.

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