

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

March 9, 2021

Dr. Rochelle Walensky  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Walensky:

We write with regard to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) school opening guidance. Numerous reports have documented how school closures continue to cause grave harm to our nation's students' educational outcomes and mental wellbeing. The overwhelming body of evidence indicates that it is safe for schools to offer in-person learning, and experts agree that the best thing we can do for students is to get them back in the classroom. Many of our states have been able to safely provide in-person learning for the majority of this year, and yet, the CDC and the Biden Administration have failed to provide our nation's schools with a workable set of standards and a consistent science-based message to help them reopen. To address those concerns, we demand a Tiger Team composed of public health experts to identify and address the source of this failure, align the guidance with science, and get our students back to school.

Last week, every Senate Democrat voted against our amendment to incentivize schools to reopen. Instead, they moved forward with \$123 billion in funding that has no ties to any specific reopening timing. We are now left with an untenable crisis where it seems unlikely the unions will end their opposition to in-person learning, even after they receive billions in additional funding. The endless moving of goalposts by teachers' unions make it hard to see a future in which our students will be able to pursue the in-person education they deserve. On February 12, 2021, the CDC admitted that listening sessions, with parents and teachers led to direct changes to their original draft guidance. By putting forth biased, unscientific guidance, the CDC made a clear decision to side with teachers unions over the well-being of students.

It is clear that a team of experts is needed to evaluate the CDC's guidance and address their clear conflicts with the science. If schools across the country followed the Biden Administration's unscientific CDC guidance to the letter, more than 90 percent of them would be forced to close. These recommendations are in flagrant opposition to the science, and yet, they support the unions' goals. While the Biden Administration tries to claim they support school reopening, by putting forth recommendations that keep almost all of our nation's schools closed, the unions are using them to extract greater concessions.

On March 9, 2021, four leading scientists released an op-ed titled, "The CDC misinterpreted our research on reopening schools. It should loosen the rules now." The scientists further stated that "keeping schools closed or even partially closed, based on what we know now is harming children." The op-ed continues that the CDC guidance is a fear-based document that is hamstringing reopening efforts, to the detriment of children. This brave call for a science-based approach that prioritizes

children and reopens schools safely joins a chorus of leading scientists who are baffled by the CDC's unacceptable approach.

The status quo cannot and must not continue—it is time to safely reopen schools. Thank you for your attention to this crisis.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator



Thom Tillis  
U.S. Senator



Joni K. Ernst  
U.S. Senator



Marsha Blackburn  
U.S. Senator



Tim Scott  
U.S. Senator



Bill Hagerty  
U.S. Senator