

California Teachers Association

1705 Murchison Drive
Burlingame, CA 94010
(650) 697-1400
www.cta.org

July 9, 2020

Contacts: Gabriella Landeros at 323-406-3270 or Claudia Briggs at 916-296-4087

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

California Educators: We Cannot Reopen Schools Unless It Is Safe

*Educators eager to be with their students, but reality of science,
facts and safety cannot be ignored*

BURLINGAME – California educators urge state lawmakers to heed repeated cautionary calls: ‘California cannot reopen unless it is safe.’ With deep concerns about the ongoing surge in COVID-19 cases and the imminent start to the 2020-21 schoolyear, CTA’s Executive Officers reiterated the concerns of the 310,000 members, students and their parents to Gov. Gavin Newsom, Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins, Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon and Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond in a [letter](#) Wednesday.

“From the moment we pivoted to digital learning last Spring, the health and safety of our students has been our top priority and continues to be. We cannot reopen schools until it is safe. With the ongoing surge in COVID-19 infections, we must take the most preventative action in the face of uncertainty to protect students, educators, and our communities,” said CTA President E. Toby Boyd. “We are eager to be back with our students, but the reality of science, facts and safety cannot be ignored.”

Educators’ commitment to their students has been on full display this summer. Throughout the state, they’ve been feeding students, checking in with families, fighting for health and safety standards that will protect students and families, advocating at all levels of government for equitable funding, resources and access to distance learning and investment in educational technology.

CTA acknowledges and appreciates the efforts to protect public education in the state budget, while recognizing that the budget relies on \$13 billion in deferrals and additional federal funding. It is why, looking forward, we believe the state must have additional revenues to reopen schools safely and to close the state’s structural deficit.

“Many local districts and communities don’t have the necessary resources or capacity to maintain even the most basic prevention measures,” said Boyd. “We’re talking about not having the room to provide for physical distancing by six feet, limiting contact and the other important

preventative actions such as personal protective equipment (PPE), testing and tracing, or adequate ventilation and cleaning supplies. All of these measures will take additional resources.”

CTA urges the state to coordinate consistent public health department operations that offer a uniform symptoms checklist and safety protocols; data transparency and accessibility; increased testing dedicated to schools for students and staff; rapid case notification and contact tracing; isolation support and medical care for our most vulnerable students and families; and health monitoring of students to serve as early understandings of transmissions in schools and warnings of any school-based outbreaks.

Additionally, the state should direct the California Department of Public Health to coordinate with CalOSHA to develop and implement training for all school districts on safety protocols and to direct that Illness and Injury Prevention plans be updated and adopted prior to the first day of in-person instruction.

“This is not a wish list. These are necessary steps based on science, facts and safety that will help mitigate the spread of the virus in our schools. Unfortunately, we have a president who chooses to ignore his own experts and the critical COVID-19 surges happening right now, but we won’t be bullied into risking the safety of our students and each other by rushing back to unsafe, unhealthy conditions. Threatening to withhold much-needed funding will further prolong our safe return,” said Boyd.

California is a state of great innovation and wealth with the fifth largest economy in the world. To address the structural deficit, CTA, along with labor partners like the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and other community groups, are calling on lawmakers to return to Sacramento following the Summer recess to adopt additional revenues, such as suspending corporate tax credits and exemptions or imposing a tax on the wealthiest billionaires to help our communities survive. CTA and SEIU launched these [digital ads](#) this week.

“We should not compromise on funding or school safety in the home of the greatest number of billionaires in the country. We need safe, equitable, and well-funded public schools and colleges – this is what California’s students deserve,” said Boyd.

More information and COVID-19 resources for educators and parents are available at cta.org/COVID-19.

###

The 310,000-member California Teachers Association is affiliated with the 3 million-member National Education Association.