

LETTERS | Opinion *This piece expresses the views of its author(s), separate from those of this publication.*

Don't ask teachers take this risk

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Those who enter the field of education do so, hopefully, with considerable idealism but minimal illusions. They should expect low pay and long hours, overcrowded classrooms and constant feuding over the allocation of funds. These unfortunately, are normal and constant. One thing they should not have to expect, however, is to be asked to put their lives on the line. They are contracting to teach, they are not enlisting in the armed forces or volunteering to give their lives for their country or their communities.

But that is exactly what they are now being asked to do, to take a risk no one has the right to ask of them – not administrators, not school boards (thank you Mike Spence for being the one school board member to not ask that), not Jay Inslee or Joe Biden. Christina Hulet, though “comfortable” with the return to school, admitted that this is a “huge ask.” Even with the word huge attached to it, this is a gross understatement. Asking teachers to teach virtually is a “huge ask.” Asking them to risk their lives, as well as the health and safety of their families, is insanity.

Now that vaccines are at least somewhat available, no adult should be bullied into working in a school building until all have received vaccinations. This includes teachers, administrators and all classified staff. Saving lives should be our number one priority. It's still not too late to return to the more cautious approach that has worked so well for Washington state to date.

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