



E. WERNER RESCHKE
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 56

May 3, 2021

TO: State Representative Barbara Smith-Warner
Chair of the House Committee on Rules

RE: Requesting a Public Hearing on HJR 18

Chair Smith-Warner,

I respectfully request a public hearing on HJR 18.

As you know, the Governor recently extended her emergency authority again. While one can argue her state of emergency was necessary at the outset of the SARS-COV-2 outbreak, the circumstances are different today. We know so much more about how this particular virus spreads. Nearly one third of Oregonians are vaccinated, and more than 70 percent of our at-risk population is fully vaccinated. Add to this natural immunity that exists.

More importantly, we as a legislative body are in session in order to direct public policy that balances the needs of public schooling, the economy and public health. Unlike the Governor's office, the legislative process is required to be open and transparent, allowing for public input. We must restore a balance of power between Oregon's governing institutions by giving the Legislature more authority over the COVID-19 response.

This most recent set of lockdowns doesn't follow the science. During Governor Brown's press conference, her advisors stated that the threshold for these shutdowns is identical to the criteria from the end of 2020. Yet today the personal protective equipment supply situation is different, the vaccination situation is different, and the treatment of patients has evolved as well. Furthermore, the regional collaboration among hospitals has been developed over the course of the pandemic. Severe cases of COVID-19 are also less common now due to factors mentioned above.

Why then is Oregon's COVID-19 response acting as if it's the end of 2020 rather than May 2021?

Furthermore, lockdowns devastate our economy, learning, mental health and more. As the PPP loan program comes to an end, it will be increasingly difficult for small businesses to keep people on the payroll. Businesses that are forced to shut down in part or in full, will send more Oregonians back to the unemployment line — something we all should want to



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avoid. Just a year ago, you issued a press release highlighting failures at the Oregon Employment Department, many which still have to be resolved.

Let's not repeat the mistakes of the past. Let's not have the Legislature sit on the sidelines. Let's open up the discussion for an appropriate COVID-19 response in Oregon, joining states like New York where the Legislature has recognized its responsible role in this process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

E. WERNER RESCHKE
State Representative, HD 56
Southern Klamath & Lake Counties