



## Washington State Legislature

Delivered Via Electronic Mail

March 8, 2021

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
Governor  
State of Washington  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee,

We know you are aware of the “Open Safe, Open Now” proposal Republicans began advocating last week. Today we write to highlight key points in our approach that complement and build on public positions you have taken and encourage you to consider adopting them as well.

First, we appreciate your continued support for returning students to their classrooms. Our “Open Safe, Open Now” proposal goes a step further by making a clear and direct call for all classrooms to reopen immediately, once the applicable Department of Health standards are being met.

In-person instruction should be a statutory right, being the most equitable form of instruction the state can offer. The lack of access to classroom instruction, particularly for children with special educational needs and students from poor or marginalized families, is clearly the most serious equity issue facing our state.

When it comes to reopening Washington’s economy, we believe our proposal builds on the first two phases of your “Healthy Washington – Roadmap to Recovery.” It was reasonable to expect that the subsequent phases of your approach would allow a move to 50% capacity, then 100% capacity, on a sensible timetable. That is exactly the approach we take in “Open Safe, Open Now.”

Between the vaccination rollout, the declining epidemiological curve, and the fact that our entire state has spent more than two weeks in Phase 2, we believe those still under activity restrictions may “open safe” to 50% capacity. At the same time, we believe it is critical to “open now.” Many of our job creators have been closed permanently by the pandemic. Many others are barely holding on and may not survive into April, the time when you projected that your Phase 3 might finally be defined.

We all have had a year to learn the importance of safety protocols, including the masking and social distancing that we and you continue to advocate. These businesses, houses of worship and other institutions care about their guests, employees and staff. We trust them to advance to 50%

capacity now, safely, and encourage you to trust them as well. And if hospital capacity is preserved, they should be allowed to advance to 100% capacity after three weeks. Our proposal differs from your approach when it comes to decision-making. We believe it is time to return control to the local public-health officials who have had a year to follow and understand the data from their counties. This should avoid potentially disastrous data-related errors like happened with the South Central region in mid-February. Just as decisions made in Washington, D.C. are not always the best for our Washington, decisions made in Olympia are not always best for Othello.

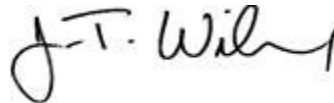
It is heartening to see other states with Democrat governors announce their intent to move in the direction we are proposing. For instance, Oregon's governor intends to order that students return to classrooms next month. Connecticut's governor intends to allow restaurants, retail stores, houses of worship and other businesses to reopen at full capacity on March 19.

Again, Governor, we view our "Open Safe, Open Now" approach as being a sensible and practical continuation of the path our state is already on, but with the hope and predictability and balance the people of our state deserve to see. We strongly encourage you to act immediately on advancing all of Washington to 50% capacity and urge you to give our other points serious consideration as you work on your own plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Braun", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Senator John Braun  
Senate Republican Leader

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.T. Wilcox", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Representative J.T. Wilcox  
House Republican Leader