July 12, 2020
Distinguished Superintendents and School Board Members:

We are writing on behalf of our many members concerned about reopening our school buildings amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Let us begin by thanking all of you for your leadership and tireless efforts to get our students and educators back in the classrooms. In this unprecedented time, districts have never been faced with the magnitude of such a decision. We acknowledge this decision is bigger than any one person, district, or community, but please consider that any preventable death or illness makes this issue critical. As educators, we believe that the safety and well-being of children is our main priority, whether it be academic, socioemotional, or physical. Now more than ever, this sacred promise that we have vowed to uphold is even more prevalent.

With the steadily increasing COVID-19 cases in the last 30 days, our members are anxious and fearful for the welfare of the children, for themselves, and for their loved ones. Spending hours inside an enclosed classroom and in constant contact would put all parties at great risk for exposure and illness. Being in a school setting, even with modifications for numbers and crowds, would exponentially increase the risk. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has stated “the longer the interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.” Even when following proper safety and sanitation procedures, we do not feel confident that we can ensure the health and wellness of children and staff and thus, feel the risk is too high to reopen school buildings.

As a collective of union presidents, we encourage you to consider full distance teaching in the fall due to safety concerns associated with group congregations. Although there is no perfect answer, our commitment to our students is paramount. Given the hardships at this time, our educators will persevere and continue nurturing a rigorous virtual platform to ensure that students will receive a quality education and learning experience. The necessary precautions that would allow staff and children to be safe at school, some with over 1,000 students, would not be financially viable or sustainable long term. The uncertainty of students being able to physically practice social distancing and adhering to safety protocols during school hours remains a high risk. We urge you to consider health official recommendations and the rising number of COVID-19 cases to assess whether you believe that reopening school buildings is in the best interest of our students and educators.

We understand there are stakeholders that want school buildings to reopen, but at this time we cannot in good conscience support prematurely opening schools. We know the decision of responsibly opening schools while weighing all the options is not one taken lightly, but we should not compromise the safety of our students or educators.

In this time of crisis, we are voicing our concerns on behalf of our many members, students, and community. We firmly believe schools should not physically open until the infection rate is under control. Otherwise we are not only putting our students and educators in danger, but also the very core of our communities. As you have been entrusted to the very lives of all students,
educators, and stakeholders, we thank you for your consideration in this matter and we look forward to working together.

Sincerely,

Temple City Education Association
Ellen Laughlin, President

Arcadia Teacher Association
Kevin Fox, President

Azusa Education Association
Meg Savella, President

Duarte Unified Education Association
Heather Messner, President

Garvey Education Association
Michael Kenny, President

Teacher's Association of South Pasadena
Estela Morales, President

Mountain View Teachers Association
Laura Gaber

Hacienda La Puente Teachers Association
Billie Joe Wright, President

San Marino Teachers Association
Leticia Aranda, President

Glendale Teachers Association
Taline Arsenian, President

Alhambra Teachers Association
Tammy Scorcia, President

United Teachers of Pasadena
Allison Steppes, President

Glendora Teachers' Association
JoAnne Johnsen, President
La Canada Teachers Association
Suzanne Cronon, President