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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Schools boards meet today about school reopening plans

New information about COVID-19 liability protection raises questions about legal risk

Klamath County School District Board of Directors will meet today in a joint emergency meeting with the Klamath Falls City Schools board to determine whether the district should continue plans to reopen to in-person instruction on Jan. 11.

The meeting is in response to an [Oregon School Boards Association memo](#) that indicates a COVID-19 liability protection law passed Dec. 23 only applies if school districts follow all state guidance, including advisory Oregon Department of Education metrics.

The governor on Dec. 23 changed the metrics from mandatory to advisory, allowing local districts and public health authorities to determine when to reopen schools to in-person instruction. As of today, the county's COVID-19 case metrics remain higher than the state's advisory metrics for reopening schools. Both school districts on Dec. 28, following a recommendation from Klamath County Public Health, decided to reopen to in-person instruction on Jan. 11.

"We decided to reopen in good faith and to do what's best for our community, following public health recommendations," said KCS D Superintendent Glen Szymoniak. "However we just found out if we do that, it may put us at extreme legal risk. Because of this risk factor, the boards are being asked to take action on this decision."

The issue with liability protection differs from the situation this past fall when the county district offered in-person instruction to K-3 students districtwide and K-12 students in its small, rural schools under hybrid, in-person models. At that time, the district did not have COVID-19 liability coverage, but since it was following specific state metrics and guidance that allowed some legal protection.

The joint Zoom meeting starts at 5:30 p.m. today (Jan. 7). The boards will hear from Jessica Dale, assistant director of Klamath County Public Health, and Jim Green, executive director of the Oregon School Boards Association. To read the agenda:

http://www.kcsd.k12.or.us/files/KCSD_Emergency_School_Board_Meeting.pdf

Public input will be accepted, but must be submitted in writing via email to blands@kcsd.k12.or.us by 4 p.m. today (Jan. 7). To join the meeting, follow this link:

<https://zoom.us/j/99000768818?pwd=V1ZD5G04VkrZn2ZncTdoVExQUzN3Zz09>

Both school districts, after a meeting with Klamath County Public Health, on Dec. 28 announced plans to reopen schools on Jan. 11 under hybrid and in-person models. Public health based its recommendation on a holistic picture of COVID-19 in the community, citing concerns about the public health implications of continued school closures, confidence in working with schools to quickly respond to cases, and the lack of spread in school settings because of strict adherence to safety and health protocols.

Follow the link to read full recommendation from Klamath County Public Health:

http://www.kcsd.k12.or.us/files/KCPH_Return_to_in-person_learning.pdf