

Stop school reopenings!

WE WON'T GO BACK!

Delegates:

Sign the nominating petition to support the EON/BAMN slate and our democratic right to run for office.

(50+ signatures needed by July 29. Use your badge number as your password.)
<https://bit.ly/AFTnominations>



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Vote EON/BAMN to lead the AFT
Equal Opportunity Now / By Any Means Necessary

The AFT must support local and state unions and community organizations who are leading the fight to stop schools from reopening!

The AFT must cease making statements in support of reopening schools, undercutting local efforts to protect students and teachers!

Stop schools from opening everywhere until an effective and safe vaccine is available on a mass basis!

Before schools reopen, it must be clear that regular and frequent testing will take place for all students, teachers, and support staff.

Protect our students, teachers, and communities from COVID-19 death!

Trump must resign or be removed by any means necessary!

Fight in the spirit of Minneapolis to protect our members, students, and communities!

EON/BAMN is running for leadership of the AFT and to lead the national movement of teachers, students, families, communities, and organizations fighting to save lives by stopping schools from reopening during this deadly COVID-19 pandemic. We salute the heroic struggles of teachers across the country who refused to return to schools and won, despite pressure from school boards and governors. EON/BAMN is proud to count ourselves among the examples of heroism of teachers like those in Fairfax, VA and in Los Angeles, Oakland, and Berkeley, CA, where teacher rebellions successfully forced school districts to reverse their position on school reopening. The method and goal of these struggles should be the AFT policy everywhere—we must stop schools from reopening, so we can protect our members, our children, and our communities. EON/BAMN is running for AFT leadership as a call to arms: the AFT must mobilize our power now to stop the suicidal policy of re-opening schools nationwide. We must provide our full support, political or otherwise, to local and state unions and community organizations leading this movement. As a national union, we must refuse to go back to schools until the pandemic is under control nationwide and a safe and effective vaccine is available to everyone, until all students and school personnel are tested, and a system of regular and frequent re-testing is put in place. *Our students and our communities must really be kept safe.*

In the Bay Area, CA, EON/BAMN worked tirelessly to keep schools in our districts from reopening and we won. In Detroit, EON/BAMN is leading daily picket lines to shut down DPS' reckless policy of holding in-person summer school, inspiring parent and community Black Lives Matter organizations to join us. Stopping the pandemic is a civil rights

life-or-death struggle, especially in majority black and Latino/a districts like Detroit and New York, in communities that include migrant farmworkers, and on Native American reservations still reeling from the devastation of COVID-19 infections and deaths.

Teachers stand now as the last line of defense for our communities. Students and families trust us and look to us for leadership on this fundamental issue. We owe it to them to tell the truth, especially with Trump and the CDC's gross mishandling of the pandemic. It's not safe to return. COVID-19 + schools reopening will result in dead children and dead teachers. It will also lead to massive spread in our communities, especially those like Chicago, New York and Detroit that suffered so much loss the first time around. We are at war, not only against this virus, but also against politicians and businesses who would sacrifice our lives rather than lose poll numbers or profits. But we can defeat them all, and this pandemic, if we fight together under a serious leadership like EON/BAMN. Our unions should be the voice that our members and communities can trust during this crisis. We cannot fail them.

References for content on reverse side:

1. Weingarten, Randi. "Teachers want to be in classroom—Congress must make it safe" *USA Today*, 19 July, 2020.
2. Progressive Caucus Instagram post
3. Glenza, Jessica. "Reckless, callous, cruel": teachers' chief denounces Trump plan to reopen schools" *The Guardian*, 17 July, 2020.
4. Tarnopolsky, Noga. "Israeli Data Show School Openings Were a Disaster That Wiped Out Lockdown Gains" *Daily Beast*, 14 July, 2020
5. McLaughlin, Kelly and Goldberg Fox, Eleanor. "Nearly a third of Florida children taking a coronavirus test are positive — and no one knows why" *Insider*, 17 July, 2020

An “F” in leadership: Randi Weingarten and the national AFT fail to meet the crisis of COVID-19.

AFT president Randi Weingarten and the national leadership of the AFT are failing to meet this ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Weingarten has made countless appearances supporting opening schools. Ever the politician, Weingarten tries to cover herself by equivocating, arguing that if we have enough federal funding for “safeguards,” (based on Trump’s CDC?!), we can “safely reopen.”¹ This is dangerous, and undercuts the active struggles and even the successes of teacher union locals and state affiliates to prevent premature reopenings. There is no amount of money that can keep our teachers, students, school staff, and communities safe, traveling daily to and from work and then teaching inside school buildings. No amount of PPE or hand sanitizer can make our schools safe while there is active community spread of the virus. Our national AFT leaders must stop gambling with our members’ and students’ lives to do favors

for their politician-bosses whose priority is keeping factories and other businesses open, not protecting students, education, or lives.

When Trump and DeVos demanded that all schools fully reopen, Weingarten made the expected noises condemning them. But rather than fighting to keep schools closed, Weingarten argued for “hybrid” education models based on “choice.” Wrong answer. “Hybrid” school openings do not protect from the Coronavirus. If anyone has any questions about their dangers, think of “hybrid” as akin to “partial,” then look at the outcome of California’s disastrous “partial” economic reopening. “Choice” of whether or not to teach inside schools does not stop the dangers of the pandemic any better than choosing to wear or not wear a facemask. We are in the middle of a full-blown pandemic on a scale not seen in this country for 100 years. If there’s a lesson to be learned from the months of June and July, it’s this: any form of reopening endangers all of us.

Weingarten’s real criticism of Trump and DeVos’ threat, however, wasn’t of their demand to reopen schools. Fundamentally, Weingarten agrees with them. Politicians and corporate CEO’s are willing to sacrifice teachers, children, anyone for the sake of profits. Weingarten wants the economy reopened, too, stating that “reopening the school buildings is key to reopening the economy...and many parents can’t return to work until their children are back in school.”²

Weingarten’s main criticism of Trump and DeVos was that their demands “scared” teachers from being willing to return back to schools, teachers whom she claimed had “just become comfortable” with the idea of returning to schools with social distancing “safeguards.”³ Presumably, Trump’s arrogance blew Weingarten’s best efforts to cajole teachers to risk our lives so the economy could reopen. AFT members deserve leaders who will protect us, not serve us up on a platter.

The EON/BAMN slate are leaders who fight for our members and our students. We will not subordinate our union to politicians or business interests. Our unions must lead the fight to stop COVID-19 catastrophe in our schools and communities.

EON/BAMN has been on the front lines of this life and death struggle to stop COVID-19 by keeping the schools closed. Our starting premise is to *preserve human life*. Countries that did a much better job than the US to battle the pandemic have already seen spikes after reopening the schools too early. The Israeli government’s decision to reopen schools back in May has proved to be a disaster, leading to massive new outbreaks of exponential increases of community spread. The number of new positive test results of confirmed cases went from less than 50 a day to 2000 a day, and authorities have once again been forced to shut down sections of their economy.⁴

Many effects of the Coronavirus have been well-publicized, and new studies shine new light on more, not fewer, dangerous and long-lasting effects. Children of all ages are susceptible to COVID-19 infection and transmission and therefore also risk death if schools reopen this fall. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stated on July 8 that in-person instruction in K-12 schools creates “the highest risk” for the spread of COVID-

19. The fact that they completely reversed themselves on July 23 only speaks to the level of their subjugation to Trump’s authoritarian demands, not to the truth. In Florida, health officials say that about 31% of 54,022 children tested have been positive, which is triple the rate of the general population.⁵

We should see clearly that the policy to reopen schools this fall has nothing to do with concern for the education of students, and more with the irrational policy of moving towards a full national reopening of the economy by corporations and politicians speaking for them. Politicians and business owners see the reopening of schools as vital for the continuation of a full reopening of the economy. For politicians of both political parties calling for in person reopening of schools, our schools are nothing more than giant day care centers that can allow working parents to fully return to work regardless of whether children will be infected and die, while also spreading the disease to their family members and communities and guaranteeing thousands more deaths and ongoing health crisis. The same people that today cry out opposing virtual education as insufficient or detrimental to the quality of education of students are the same people who yesterday were implementing the policies of attacks on public education, shutting down schools, cutting resources and funding to our schools and

our communities.

EON/BAMN has been intransigent against reopening schools during this ongoing pandemic. We have a successful record this summer of keeping schools from reopening, and stopping school districts from endangering teachers, students, school staff, and consequently families and community members. From Salinas to most of the Bay Area in northern California, in Michigan and in some of the hardest hit areas, especially for black and Latino/a communities, we have mobilized by taking direct action to protect our communities. We tell the truth about the records and policies of politicians, Democrat and Republican, who are more concerned with rates of profit rather than the lives of people in our communities. In Detroit, EON/BAMN has valiantly fought against in-person summer school by mobilizing teachers, students, parents, community members and community organizations to block buses, hold caravan protests, circulate petitions, and forced the district to provide testing for all students through an ongoing lawsuit in court. This is the spirit and the method of struggle that our union needs now on a national basis. It comes down to leadership. EON/BAMN will take independent initiative to defend our members and our communities from deadly premature reopening.

If we fight in the spirit of Minneapolis, we can win.

The people of Minneapolis, in their fight for Justice for George Floyd, have shown us that we can win when we take matters into our own hands. While politicians and so-called “community leaders” have spent most of their time this year speechifying about the November elections, making the same promises that our communities have been hearing since the last civil rights movement, the new civil rights movement has won victories that would never have been possible just months before. The teacher and community-led movement to stop schools reopening is a part of the new civil rights movement that started fighting for justice for George Floyd and to end of all forms of

institutional racism.

EON/BAMN calls on teachers all over the country to oppose in-person school reopenings until a safe and effective vaccine is available, and until mass testing shows that there is no further spread of the virus. The movement must continue to fight to keep all schools closed. We must continue to demand Trump resign or be removed now to stop his deadly COVID-19 policies and his racist, authoritarian vision for America. We must not wait until November. Every day counts. We demand a national policy to reinstate stay-at-home orders, a national mass testing and aggressive contact tracing program, and an abundant supply of PPE, including masks. Our children should have fully-funded distance learning education with

free technology and internet access, and their families should get all the financial relief they need to be able to stay home with their children without having to risk their lives to go to work. With our union leading in the spirit of Minneapolis and with the movement, we can stop the premature reopening of the economy and its devastating consequences. Fighting in the spirit of Minneapolis, we can save our country from Trump and everything he stands for and begin creating a society of social justice that our labor movement has always stood for at its best.

We will fight to protect our children and humanity by any means necessary. Vote EON/BAMN for AFT national leadership. We are ready to lead and fighting to win!