



September 14, 2020

Re: COVID-19 is not over: No college or university president should risk the lives of young people by reopening their schools.

Dear College/University Presidents and Board of Regents:

Spearheaded by URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity, the undersigned 329 individuals and nearly 30 local, state, and national organizations write to demand that you immediately close all on-campus classes, buildings, and facilities until it is safe for all students to re-enter. The United States, especially the South and Midwest, is still in the midst of a pandemic and with recent reports showing [young people are increasingly testing positive for COVID-19](#), reopening should not be taken lightly, nor should students' lives be used as a social experiment.

URGE is a multi-state Reproductive Justice organization led by and for young Black and Brown queer, trans, and gender-nonbinary people. In addition to our federal policy and advocacy work, we span six states: Ohio, Kansas, Georgia, Alabama, Texas, and California. URGE comprises a dynamic group of young people working to create meaningful change for our communities by using a Reproductive Justice framework in our grassroots organizing, advocacy, and policy work. COVID-19 -- and the reckless reopening of schools -- is indeed a Reproductive Justice issue.

Reproductive Justice can only be achieved when all people have the economic, social, and political power and resources to make healthy decisions about their bodies, sexuality, and reproduction for ourselves, our families, and our communities in all areas of life. It is our work to manifest a liberated world where we can live with justice, love freely, express our gender and sexuality, and define and create families of our choosing without fear, violence, or interference -- from no one, especially from state actors and/or those with institutional power.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to take hold in the United States and around the world, colleges and universities have begun to open their doors for students to return to campus this fall. A [New York Times survey](#) of more than 1,500 American colleges and universities — including every four-year public institution, every private college that competes in N.C.A.A. sports and others that identified cases — has revealed at least 51,000 cases and at least 60 deaths

since the pandemic began. One look at the New York Times' map will show COVID-19 infections among college students are widespread and are particularly concentrated in the South and Midwest, where more Black individuals and families, including queer ones, live.

With no vaccine in the United States, insufficient guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and schools lacking the infrastructure and resources needed for adequate testing, colleges and universities are not prepared to properly reopen.

[It's been reported that many universities are struggling financially and that has driven decisions to resume on-campus instruction.](#) In some colleges, students have been forced to sign waivers saying their university would not refund tuition fees partially or in full in the case of a closure. **Colleges and universities must remove these anti-student refund rules and revoke any waivers signed. As institutions of education, an environment intended for learning and critical thought, you should not risk the futures of your community for financial gain and continue business as usual: This is not usual.** You are unacceptably experimenting with your student, staff, and faculties' lives, and in many cases, it is clear the experiment is failing.

If your administration and institution supports students the way that it claims, you will immediately close campus until there is a vaccine or until it is deemed truly safe to reopen by experts. Young people, especially Black and other young people of color and students with disabilities, are among those who are most at risk of not only getting COVID-19 but also dying from it. There is no way the most marginalized students at your institution can receive a quality education if they fear getting sick or will be shamed and blamed by administrators for transmitting COVID-19.

Many local, state, and federal government responses to COVID-19 have utterly failed to keep the majority of people in the country safe from the virus. Don't allow higher education to get added to the list of institutions that fail marginalized people during this pandemic.

And, following the [lead of other universities](#), institutions must continue to be alert and responsive to new threats to international students' status, and ensure that they can remain in our communities to study even while campuses continue with online learning for as long as is necessary.

We ask that you make the decision to not reopen your campus or immediately close if on-campus instruction has resumed.

Sincerely,

URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity

Organizational Signers:

Access Reproductive Care (ARC)-Southeast
ACCESS Women's Health Justice
Atlantic
California National Organization for Women
Citizens For Choice
Feminist Women's Health Center
Frontera Fund
Hometown Action
I Am Abel Foundation
If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice
Modern Military Association of America
Montgomery PRIDE United/ Bayard Rustin Community Center
National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
National Black Justice Coalition
National Equality Action Team (NEAT)
Ohio Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio
SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective
SPARK Reproductive Justice NOW!
Student Action
Texas Rising at Texas State University
Texas Rising at UTSA
The Ordinary People Society
Transgender Education Network of Texas
UNT ROSE
Women Have Options/ Ohio
Young Invincibles

Individual Signers:

Abigail Avila
Adam Marten
Adriana Garcia
Adrianna Rosario
Adrianna Rosario
Akela Crawford
Aleena Khan
Aleia Fugitt
Alex Gordon
Alexis Cole

Alexis Duran
Alexis Elicerio
Alexis Saenz
Alexzanah Griffin
Alicia Burns-Wright
Aliyah Dorsey
Alli Gurka
Allison Mazur
Alyssa Brodeur
Alyssa Lindsey
Amanda Barron
Amanda Page
Amanda Reed
Amaya Smith
Ameera Khan
Ana Marie Zipagan
Anastacia Anderson
Anderson Lawhead
Andy Escobar
Angie Luna
Aniah Bell-Langster
Antoinette Bonsignore
Anya Kushwaha
April Sprunger
Ari Villanueva
Ariana Rodriguez
Ariana Ybarra
Asa Fludd
Ayiesha Beverly
Ayoluwa Parham
Becca Chant
Becky Sillasen
Beining Tian
Bella Petrakis
Bianca Mujica
Bill Ivey
Brandi Williams
Briana Adams
Brianna Haney
Bridget McGovern

Brittani Hill
Britton Jones
Brooke Tyus
C.A. Matthews
Caleb Van Ornum
Cameron combs
Cameron Hogarth
Camryn Byers
Cara Kulwicki
Carlee Fernandez
Carly Holmes
Carly Vendeiro
Carrie Coisman
Casey Pittman
Catherine Raybould
Cecelia Chisholm
Chanel Brown
Chelsey Gao
Cherie Snyder
Chijindu Obiofuma
Christian Adams
Christina Dierkes
Christine Baker
Christopher Armand
Colleen Kemp
Corey Zaher
Corinthia Fraire
Courtney Roark
Crystal Gonzalez
Daijha Mossen
Dana Evans
Danielle Dake
Danielle Harvey
Danielle Hurd
Danielle Whitmore
Del Hardesty
Denzel McAlpine
Destiny Singh
Dey Nava
Diamond Mason

Diana Martinez-Garcia
Divine Agbeko
Dmitry Landa
Donna Roseborough
Dorothy Lynn Brooks
Earl Watson
Elizabeth Richardson
Emily Cuarenta
Emily Hance
Emily Morton
Emma Armstrong
Emma Duhamel
Erica Webb
Erin Kelley
Esther Lim
Gabrielle Tibbetts
Garrett Riou
Genevieve Haskins
Geoffrey T. Witherspoon Jr.
George Johnson
Gianni Aponte
Glenn Sayre
Gradeigh Barnett
Gregory Timmer
Gwen Kruse
Haley Czarnek
Hanh Huynh
Hanlyn Tyler
Hannah McCauley
Hannah Perkins
Hannah Thalenberg
Hannah Wheelwright
Harper Jean Tobin
Heather Whitsett
Hilary Gamble
Isabella Briseno
Isabelle Beauregard
Jabian Cooper
Jackie Blank
Jacoya Ellis

Jacqueline Guerrero
Jaira Burke
Jalen Allen
Jalessah Jackson
James Childers
James Johnson
James Stair
Janie Scheinbach
Jaron Wilson
Jarrett Cloud
Jasmine Andrus
Javier Esparza
Jazmin Gonzalez
Jeana Nam
Jenn Eidemiller
Jennifer Castaneda
Jeseka Fuller
Jess Rock
Jesse Sabio
Jessica Dumas
Jessica Hall
Jessica Smith
Jessy Rosales
Jillian turman
John Cochran
John Viacrucis
Jordan Fan
Jordyn Close
Jostin Grimes
Jourdain Henderson
Joy Green
Julia Britting
Justin Seebauer
Kahlib Barton
Kara Nowakowski
Karina Moreno
Katerina Tsvetkova
Katharine Warner
Katherine Guezille
Katheryn Jenifer

Kathryn Dean
Kathryn Johnston
Kathryn Turnbull
Kathryn Walsh
Katie Swindler
Kayla Bradley
Keelin McGuinness
Kelley Fox
Kelsey Alexis Jackson
Kenyetta Chinwe
Kenyetta Whitfield
Kieran Burns
Kirsten Schumacher
Kristin Wall
Kyra Reed
Latrice Lee
Laura White
Lauren Bellard
Lauren Whatley
Laurie Dils
Leah Diehl
Leia Troop
Leon Linam
Leona Yeager
Leslie Lopez
Lindsay Carignan
Lisa Sharlach
Lisette Ramos
Liz Wagner
Loanni Del Monte
Lucas Griffith
Luisa O'Neill
Lydia Stuckey
Mac Sippial
Maddy Barney-Gibbs
Madeleine Howell
Maham Shariff
Maiana Wells
Makayla Richards
Maria Rodriguez

Mariah Spigner
Marie Ngobo Ekamby
Marissa Elkins
Mary Faulkner
Maya Bian
Maya Hart
McPherson Newell
Megan LaVeck
Megha Rimal
Meigan Parris
Melissa Mooney
Melissa Neely
Meredith Caldwell
Merlin Wilson
Mia Branum-Martin
Mia Slone
Micah Saunders
Michael Tomczyszyn
Michaela Lynch
Michele Hutchins
Michelle Davis
Michelle Reynolds
Mike Daly
Mindy McGrath
Minerva Garcia
Molly Broscoe
Monica Bwalya
Monica Edwards
Monica Gayles Dorsey
Monique Carter
Morgan Gimblet
Nadia Madyun-King
Naomi Ginn
NaShaya Bartolo
Natalie Quintero-Flores
Natalie Webb
Natasha Hudgins
Nathan Cohen
Neve Brown
Nicole Edgerton

Nicole Molnar
Nicole Morgenstern
Nigel Morton
Nikeya Cole
Niko Rajani
Nikolas Farrell
Noah Levenberg
Olivia Martin
Olivia Oney
Olson Cannon
Omar Alzcano
Ose Arheghan
Pat Deering
Paul Eisenberg
Pazia Belmonte
Peaches Ostalaza
Pooja Manne
Preston Mitchum
Quinn Thompson
QuJane' Gordon
Rachael Cundey
Rachel Breeding
Rachel Waters
Raiha Bajwa
Randy Harrison
Rebecca Gomez
Robert Mammon
Rosary Saucedo
Roula AbiSamra
Rubie Zamora
Sabeegah Ravat
Samantha Allen
Samantha Finn
Samantha Garcia
Sanaa Yusuf
Sarah Dresser
Sarah Inskeep
Sarah Philips
Sarah Segers
Schuyler Pierson

Sergio Cuevas
Seyi Adebajo
Shae Ward
Shalin Shah
Sharon Rothe
Sheelove Dorcena
Shelby Wilkins
Sierra Dobbs-Brown
Sierra Robinson
Sirina Sucklal
Sonja Goetsch-Avila
Sophia Godina
Sorrel Tan
Stacey Shearrion
Stephanie Barnett
Stephanie Kollmann Baker
Sydney Walker
Tayler Harrelson
Taylor Harrison
Teannae Owens
Temi Bennett
Theresa Gassert
Thomas Newell
Tia Woods
Tiffany Mann
Tiffany Pyette
Timothy Daniels
Tori Rodriguez
Tottionna Matthews
Valorie Battle Haddock
Versace Fatal
Vic Kennedy
Victoria Edwards
Vincent Arciniega
Virginia Hartung
Xavier Richardson
Yoselyn Gutierrez
Zachary Shulman
Zelete Garza