

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We have been greatly encouraged by your recent comments assuring New Yorkers that K-12 students will make a full in-person return to school in September. We are united in our deeply held belief that the path to a full recovery from the pandemic must include a full in-person reopening for all students as soon as possible.

Throughout the pandemic, each school district and BOCES of Monroe County have worked hard to implement public health guidelines with fidelity and in a spirit of collaboration with state and local health authorities. It is in that same spirit of collaboration that we write to you today to advocate for measures that we believe to be practical, safe and essential for a full reopening to become a reality.

Please give consideration to the following recommendations from the Monroe County Council of School Superintendents:

Remote Learning:

- A decision to offer remote learning should be made by local Boards of Education based on local circumstances and capacity. Districts offering remote learning should be allowed to create local criterion for program participation and the state should support the development of regional remote learning programs.

Social Distancing and Masking:

- Given the high degree of vaccination and exceedingly rare evidence of school transmission, a specific distance requirement should be eliminated.
- In alignment with the most recent CDC guidance, masking outdoors should not be required at any time.
- Indoor masking should be based on local data and be determined in collaboration with our local health department.
- Schools will not be required to collect vaccination data.

Testing:

- Testing of students and staff should not be required but surveillance testing should be offered as an option for a school to remain open if rates increase in a school or district.

Micrometrics/School Rates

- Infection rates used for opening or closing decisions should be based on school specific infection rates.

Assurances/Procedures

- Recommended cleaning and disinfection procedures should be updated based on current science regarding surface transmission.
- The daily health screening process requirements should be eliminated. Schools have long communicated the “stay home when you’re sick” message and the use of the screener has become so routine as to completely mitigate its usefulness.

Vaccination

- Allow vaccination rates for individual schools to allow for school or district based flexibility in capacity requirements if masking and distancing requirements remain in place.

Capacity

- Eliminate outdoor capacity requirements.
- If indoor requirements remain, consider vaccination rates to allow for additional flexibility.

Other Guidance and Considerations

- Modify current guidance for Interscholastic Athletics, Performing Arts, Physical Education, Food and Transportation Services to align with the recommendations above.

Sincerely,