

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

Commissioner Howard Zucker
New York State Department of Health
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12237

March 25, 2021

Dear Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Zucker,

On behalf of New York State Superintendents from the Monroe County region, we thank you and your teams for your efforts to support New York State during this pandemic. We have learned a great deal over the past year and you have adjusted the state's approach to combating COVID-19 on many fronts as conditions have improved. Based on new guidance from the CDC and a study by the Infectious Diseases Society of America, we ask that you revise in-school distancing requirements to three feet. We consider this request urgent for the social-emotional and educational health of the more than 100,000 students we serve.

Many districts are planning to reopen more broadly because the past year of hybrid and remote learning has had a largely negative impact on students. Parents, teachers, students, counselors and administrators report that a concerning number of students are falling behind or failing, completely disengaged from learning, withdrawn, anxious and even self-harming. For their safety, students need the routine, interaction and support of the school environment.

We strongly believe that schools continue to be one of the safest places for students during the pandemic. In-school positivity rates are well below community transmission rates and in-school transmission between students has proven almost non-existent. Given the new data supporting three foot distancing, and our ability to contact trace, we are confident in our ability to safely welcome more students back for more days of in-person instruction and would require:

- physical distancing of three feet with masking;
- limited bus capacity of approximately two-thirds with masking; and,
- the continuation of all other in-school safety measures including cleaning and sanitizing practices; on-site availability of PPE for students and staff; in-school COVID testing as appropriate.

Monroe County school districts are working diligently to update and submit comprehensive district and school plans aligned with the three-foot distancing guidance. We intend to bring larger numbers of students back to school more frequently in the fourth marking period abiding by the assurances as described.

We urge New York State to move swiftly to lessen in-school distancing requirements and respectfully ask that you review and approve of the aforementioned amended district plans so that school leaders can open our schools for more in-person learning.

Thank you for your consideration.

We the undersigned Monroe County Superintendents,

Daniel White
BOCES 1

Christopher Dailey
Gates Chili

Carmen Gumina
Webster

Jo Anne Antonacci
BOCES 2

Kathleen Graupman
Greece Central

Aaron Johnson, Ed.D.
West Irondequoit

Kevin McGowan, Ed.D.
Brighton

Casey Kosiorek, Ed.D.
Hilton

Lynda Quick, Esq.
Wheatland-Chili

Sean Bruno
Brockport

Gene Mancuso
Honeoye Falls-Lima

Lori Orologio, Ed.D.
Churchville-Chili

Thomas Putnam, Ed.D.
Penfield

Mary Grow
East Irondequoit

Michael Pero
Pittsford

James Haugh
East Rochester

Lawrence Bo Wright
Rush-Henrietta

Brett Provenzano
Fairport

Pamela Kissel, Ed.D.
Spencerport