

## NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

March 22, 2021

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor  
State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
State Capitol Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

We appreciate this opportunity to contact you directly to urge you to take immediate action that will allow a return to full-time, in-person classroom instruction for New York State students.

Last Friday, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) acknowledged the growing body of public health data and revised its guidelines to reduce the permissible distancing in school classrooms from 6 feet to 3 feet.

Consequently, the main obstacle standing in the way of more New York State students being able to return to full-time, in-person learning is your Executive Order continuing to require a minimum distance of 6 feet between students in classrooms.

On March 17th, 23 regional school superintendents comprising the Greater Southern Tier BOCES (GST BOCES) we represent sent you a letter expressing their collective support for the move from 6- to 3-foot distancing. The superintendents note that while some, mostly smaller districts have been able to fully resume daily, in-person learning, most districts, especially larger ones, cannot do the same for their students and families because of your current Executive Order requiring the minimum distance of 6 feet.

In part, the superintendents wrote to you, "It is our sincere hope that you and the Department of Health will consider a more equitable approach in adjusting the density requirements that are prohibiting full in-person daily learning from occurring. Our students need more connection, instruction, and interaction. Our school communities need to see that there is light at the end of this pandemic tunnel."

We fully agree and, today, we join them in calling for the state Department of Health to reissue the guidance and protocols that most accurately reflect current COVID-19 conditions and authorize the necessary local flexibility that will allow district administrators and their school communities to accomplish a complete return to the classroom effectively, efficiently, safely, and successfully.

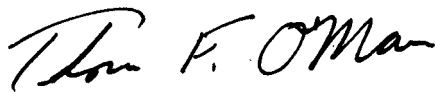
That means reducing the state's current distancing requirement from 6 feet to 3 feet in accordance with the new CDC guidelines.

We are calling on your administration to immediately move forward to allow the requested change in state regulations. Until New York State revises this mandate and reduces the distancing requirement – a move now supported by federal health leaders, many physicians and public health experts, as well as scientific studies and data --

students in too many districts will remain shut out from returning to their classrooms full time. It is time to move this priority to the top of the list. It is time to fully acknowledge how critical this action is to the educational development and mental health of our students.

It is time for all of our students to go back to school.

Sincerely,



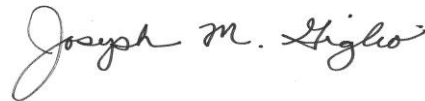
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cc: Commissioner Howard A. Zucker, NYS Department of Health