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ALBANY

**STEVE HAWLEY**  
Deputy Minority Leader  
139<sup>th</sup> District

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Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.  
New York State Department of Health, Commissioner  
Corning Tower  
Empire State Plaza,  
Albany, NY 12237

Dear Commissioner Zucker:

I am hereby requesting that you consider the safe distance among students in our schools be reduced to 3 feet, as opposed to 6 feet, so that our children can resume normal class time. Many nations have been able to adopt this standard and return to classroom learning without increasing the spread of COVID-19 within the community. As you know, students need social interaction, and do better academically when in a classroom setting. Virtual learning has been detrimental to the solid education our children deserve.

It is not only our children who have been negatively affected by remote learning, but their parents as well. There are issues with the hybrid model, and some parents have had to transfer their children to private schools because of it. Parents oftentimes don't have the tools needed to effectively teach and guide their children to the best of their abilities, especially when their education is facilitated through technologies that many are still learning to understand and use effectively.

We must also consider that for many students, home is not an environment conducive to learning. For many, school is a safe refuge where young people can know they'll be safe and provided with nutritious food. We need to weigh the benefits of adhering to the 6-foot distance rule, as opposed to keeping students from returning to the normalcy of being physically present in school.

I, along with my constituents, respectfully urge you to consider reforming the current 6-foot standard. Our children deserve the best education we can give them, which they simply aren't getting with remote learning. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

STEVE HAWLEY  
Deputy Minority Leader  
139th AD

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