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Erie County

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
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July 2, 2020

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

Governor Cuomo,

Several parents in my district have expressed their worries regarding the upcoming school year. While their concerns varied, the one thing all agreed upon was that the uncertainty of the situation is causing great stress for them and their families. I believe the issues they raise are valid and must be taken into consideration when determining our state's education plan moving forward.

Some concerns my constituents have communicated to me include:

- Working while schools are closed:
 - Figuring out child care, continuing their children's education, and guiding their children through the negative consequences of social isolation
- Children's health while schools are closed:
 - An increase in sedentary lifestyle, time spent on screens, time away from friends, and an uptick in obesity
- Helping disadvantaged children while schools are closed:
 - Filling the void in social services left by school closures; many disadvantaged children rely on schools for food, mental health services, and more
- Opening schools too early:
 - Parents being uncomfortable with sending their children back to school because it might expose their child to the virus
 - The potential health consequences for children infected by Covid-19, including alarming reports of an inflammatory disease similar to Kawasaki disease in Covid-19 positive children
 - Parents believing their child is not capable of wearing a mask throughout the day
 - Children with disabilities being unable to wear a mask or being limited in practicing proper precautions
 - Requiring children to take a rushed vaccine as a condition of returning to school, including among parents who are otherwise supportive of the measures New York has taken with regard to vaccine requirements

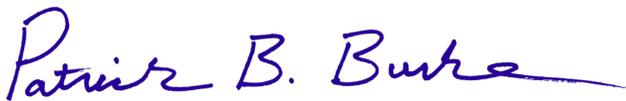
- Seeing an exodus of students from private schools:
 - If remote education continues, parents may be unwilling to pay tuition for schools that are indefinitely closed
 - Public schools may be ill-equipped to take on a large influx of students from private schools if they close
- Teachers and school districts needing clarity in order to prepare for the upcoming year

People are looking for clear guidance from their government. Under a responsible federal administration, I would expect vast resources to assist state and local governments until this crisis is averted, but we do not have responsible leadership coming out of Washington right now. We must look to the executive branch of our government here in New York State to lead the way.

There are, of course, many variables that must be determined before a decision is made, and people must understand that these decisions could change if the circumstances change. I simply ask that the State of New York offer guidelines to ease some of the anxiety around this issue and allow our families and institutions to prepare accordingly.

As governor of our great state, the task ahead of you is monumental. While I view the role of the state legislature as a counterweight to executive power, it is coupled with my belief that we must work as one in these moments of crisis. I am available to assist you in any way that can help the people of our state.

Thank you for your attention,



Patrick B. Burke
Member of Assembly, A.D. 142