

**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 26, 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report that a concerning number of students are falling behind or failing, completely disengaged from learning, withdrawn, anxious and even self-harming.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  
Monroe One BOCES

Brett Provenzano  
Fairport

Lawrence Bo Wright  
Rush-Henrietta

Jo Anne Antonacci  
Monroe 2-Orleans  
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Christopher Dailey  
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Spencerport

Kevin McGowan, Ed.D.  
Brighton

Kathleen Graupman  
Greece Central

Carmen Gumina  
Webster

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Thomas Putnam, Ed.D.  
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James Haugh  
East Rochester

Michael Pero  
Pittsford

cc:

NYS Assembly Member Demond Meeks  
NYS Assembly Member Harry Bronson  
NYS Assembly Member Jennifer Lunsford  
NYS Assembly Member Josh Jensen  
NYS Assembly Member Michael Benedetto  
NYS Assembly Member Sarah Clark  
NYS Assembly Member Stephen Hawley  
NYS Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie  
Commissioner of Public Health for Monroe County,  
Dr. Michael Mendoza  
Commissioner of NYS Education Betty Rosa  
Congressman Joseph Morelle  
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Deputy Director for Advocacy, Research and  
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Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce President  
Robert Duffy  
Regional Director of the Empire State Development,  
Vinnie Esposito  
NYS Senator Jeremy Cooney  
NYS Senator Pamela Helming  
NYS Senator Patrick Gallivan  
NYS Senator Robert Ortt  
NYS Senator Samra Brouk  
NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins