



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara: Important that NYS school guidance recognizes need for flexibility, regional balance

THOMAS F. O'MARA July 13, 2020

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Elmira, N.Y., July 13—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) called **today's release of the New York State guidelines for local school districts** to begin taking specific actions for school reopenings in September an important first step.

O'Mara urged the Cuomo administration to ensure that local decision making will remain a priority on this challenge going forward.

O'Mara said, "I said last week that these critical decisions could not be made through a one-size-fits-all approach by an Albany-based bureaucracy. Local decision making, regional conditions on the ground and the need for ongoing flexibility must remain priorities. There's an enormous task facing local school districts to undertake this planning and begin preparing their facilities, staffs and school communities at large. It's an incredibly tight timeline and I can't say enough about the intense work that's going to take place within our school communities over the next several weeks. The positive news remains that our local county leaders, public health professionals, educators and school communities have proven throughout the COVID-19 pandemic that they are up to the task and will continue to practice the dedication, discipline and responsibility that have carried us this far throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. No one is more focused on the health and well-being of our students, families and school communities. School administrators, teachers and parents have already been remarkable to help students throughout this public health crisis."

Last Wednesday at the GST BOCES Bush Campus in Horseheads, O'Mara and U.S.

Representative Tom Reed (R-NY) and area Assembly representatives Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning), Assemblyman Chris Friend (R,C,I-Big Flats), Assemblywoman Marjorie Byrnes (R,C-Caledonia) and Assemblyman Joseph Giglio (R,C,I-Gowanda) joined regional education leaders to call on New York State to give area schools the go-ahead to begin implementing plans to reopen in September.

The group highlighted the success of the regional COVID-19 response, praising the work of local officials and the ongoing cooperation of local citizens and communities to follow the safety guidelines recommended to stop the spread of the coronavirus and demonstrate the feasibility of safe reopening. The group also noted that the knowledge and experience

gained over the past several months leaves them confident about developing and implementing safe school reopening plans for September – if, they stressed, the state releases the necessary protocols and gives school districts ample time to thoroughly prepare their facilities and staff.

Following today's release of the needed state guidance, school districts have until July 31 to submit local plans. The state plans to announce final reopening decisions during the first week of August.