



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

Westchester Reopening Update: 7-16-2020

SHELLEY B. MAYER July 16, 2020

| ISSUE: **SCHOOL BUILDING REOPENING, RENT RELIEF, CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

**WESTCHESTER
REOPENING
UPDATE
7-16-2020**



Dear Friends:

Although our in-person meetings are restricted, I have been busy joining local community meetings virtually. Over the past week, I met with parents of adult children in group homes who stand to be impacted by the proposed OPWDD cuts that colleagues and I are working to curtail; met with nonprofit providers serving Hispanic communities to discuss housing & food insecurity needs throughout the 37th Senate District; participated in a Youth Town Hall

focused on racial justice organized by Westchester County Legislator Kitley Covill; attended both the Armonk Chamber of Commerce and Eastchester-Tuckahoe Chamber of Commerce meetings on reopening issues; provided a presentation to the Mamaroneck Town Board about the [policing reforms legislative package](#) adopted in June; and hosted a Zoom meeting with school Superintendents in the district about reopening issues.

As we plan for the fall, I know that many of you are contemplating what plans to reopen school buildings will look like if buildings are to reopen. Like many of you, my first priority is the safety of students, teachers, administrators and staff. There are many thoughtful and creative solutions districts are proposing within their school building reopening plans that foster learning while keeping everyone safe. Each school district must submit for approval its final reopening plan by Friday, July 31st. Between August 1st and August 7th, Governor Andrew Cuomo will determine whether regional metrics will allow school buildings within a region to be reopened.

On Monday, July 13th, Governor Cuomo announced a data-driven formula to determine whether school buildings would be permitted to reopen in the fall. For school buildings to reopen, the region must be in Phase Four with a daily infection rate below 5% using a 14-day rolling average. School buildings are subject to close again if the regional infection rate is greater than 9% using a 7-day rolling average beginning on August 1st. As of Thursday, July 16th, the infection rate for Westchester and the Mid-Hudson Region is [1.1%](#) with a [1.1%](#) 7-day rolling average.

Determining how to reopen school buildings in the midst of a global viral pandemic is an unprecedented and challenging task. The State Education Department (SED) has [released](#)

guidance that incorporates NYS Department of Health (NYSDOH) guidance to assist school districts in formulating their reopening plans that create protocols for screening, transportation, classroom space, food service, tracing and more. SED guidance also incorporates curriculum and instruction requirements for both remote and in-person learning. No doubt these plans will require adjustments as districts reopen and protocols calibrate to real-world conditions. If you have a particular worry ahead of school reopening, I urge you to contact your local school district and make your voice heard. There are many interests the state and school districts are working to balance, including the safety of instructors, staff, students, the families to whom they return home, and ensuring students are engaged & learning. As districts reopen, the state will closely monitor infection rates and offer updated guidance as needed.

NEW YORK FORWARD

- Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a data-driven formula that will determine whether schools buildings are permitted to reopen: school districts must be in a region that has entered Phase Four and have a daily infection rate below 5% using a 14-day average. If the regional infection rate climbs above 9% using a 7-day rolling average, schools buildings in that region must close.
- A total of 22 states meet the metrics to necessitate a travel advisory requiring individuals who travel to New York from those states to quarantine for 14 days. The full list of states on the travel advisory are Arizona, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin.
- Westchester County & the Mid-Hudson Region are in Phase Four of reopening. Phase Four includes Higher Education, Low-Risk Outdoor Arts & Entertainment, Low-Risk

Indoor Arts & Entertainment, Media Production, and Professional Sports Competitions with No Fans. [Click here](#) for Phase Four industry guidance.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE FUNDING AVAILABLE TO TENANTS IMPACTED BY THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Thanks to funding made available through the federal CARES Act, the COVID Rent Relief Program will be able to provide families with up to 4 months of rental assistance.

Applications are [available here](#) and the application period will only be open for two weeks.

To be eligible, household income before March 1, 2020 must have been below 80% of the area median income (AMI). [Click here](#) to find the county AMI as adjusted by household size.

Criteria for eligibility for the COVID Rent Relief Program also includes the household paying 30% of gross monthly income towards rent and having lost income between April 1, 2020 to July 31, 2020. [Click here](#) to find out more about the COVID Rent Relief Program in [English](#) & [Spanish](#).

PRESSING TO KEEP A YONKERS CATHOLIC SCHOOL OPEN

I was profoundly disappointed to learn that the Archdiocese of New York [announced](#) that 20 Catholic schools throughout the state will not reopen due to the financial impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic, including the St. Ann School & St. Paul School in Yonkers. This week, I co-authored a letter to Michael J. Deegan, Superintendent of Schools, seeking to meet and find a solution for our Yonkers students.

The [letter](#) states:

We are asking to meet with you to determine if a merger of schools or some other alternative is possible that modifies the plan that was released and preserves at least one of these schools, hopefully so that children attending either school will have either St. Ann or St. Paul available to them for the coming year. We believe this moment requires creativity and determination to find a solution; we want to work with you

to achieve that.

[Click here](#) to read the full letter. These schools have served the Yonkers community for multiple generations, and parents have sacrificed to provide a high quality Catholic education for their children. I have hope that, by working together, we can find a solution to keep at least one of the schools open.

LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS ON THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

This week, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie announced a series of joint legislative hearings to examine the Coronavirus Pandemic's impact on NYS. These hearings will inform the legislature's work in responding to the pandemic's effects in our communities. Each of the meetings will be livestreamed on the Senate website at nysenate.gov. The joint legislative hearings include:

- July 28 – How COVID-19 Has Impacted Higher Education
- August 3 & August 10 – Residential Health Care Facilities and COVID-19
- August 11 – Elections in a Pandemic: A Review of the 2020 Primaries
- August 12 – Hospitals and COVID-19
- August 13 – Impact of COVID-19 on Workers
- August 14 – How COVID-19 Impacts New York's Veteran Community
- August 25 – COVID-19 and the MTA

NYS DOT PROJECT SUCCESSFUL AT REDUCING BRIDGE STRIKES AT KING STREET BRIDGE

Westchester County Executive George Latimer announced that the \$1.8 million NYS

Department of Transportation project to mitigate bridge strikes at King Street Bridge, completed in the summer of 2019, has [significantly reduced bridge strikes](#). The project installed new sensors, signs, lighting and communication upgrades on I-287 and Hutchinson River Parkway to alert over-height vehicles, box trucks & tractor trailers, to keep off or exit the Hutch before encountering bridges that are too low to accommodate them. Before these upgrades, the King Street Bridge was struck 130 times between 2008 and 2018.

METRO-NORTH RAILROAD LAUNCHES PPE VENDING MACHINES AT 12 STATIONS

Metro-North Railroad announced it has reconfigured vending machines at 12 stations to allow riders to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) including KN95 masks, hand sanitizer, and gloves. PPE vending machines can be found at the following 12 Metro-North Railroad locations: Croton-Harmon, Dobbs Ferry, Fordham, Hastings-on-Hudson, Harlem-125th Street, North White Plains, Port Chester, Poughkeepsie, Rye, Southeast, Tarrytown, Yonkers. Since the beginning of the Coronavirus Pandemic, Metro-North Railroad has implemented its most aggressive cleaning regiment with daily disinfection and cleaning of train cars and stations. [Click here](#) to learn more.

As always, feel free to contact my office at (914) 934-5250 or smayer@nysenate.gov if there is an issue with which we can offer assistance or if you have questions about reopening for yourself or your business.

Kind regards,

Shelley B. Mayer

State Senator

37th District

