



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel G. Stec

# Stec welcomes graduation guidance

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Senator Dan Stec today said he's pleased Governor Andrew Cuomo has provided new guidance that will allow in-person high school and college graduation ceremonies this year.

Stec, who heard from many disappointed parents when last year's graduation ceremonies were cancelled due to COVID-19, had begun pushing last month for in-person graduation and for the Cuomo administration to provide guidance so schools could plan.

"It's a big day, a very special one for graduates and their families," said Stec. "It is one of those moments you can't get back, so the disappointment last year was understandable, to say the least. Given what we've learned about COVID, the vaccinations taking place and better weather ahead allowing ceremonies to take place outside, I am very happy schools can start planning with confidence."

According to the governor's office, effective May 1, indoor and outdoor graduation and commencement ceremonies will be allowed. The ceremonies must adhere to health and safety protocols, including requiring face masks, social distancing, screenings and contact tracing information being collected.

Outdoor ceremonies of over 500 people will be limited to 20 percent of capacity for venues with a total capacity of 2,500 or more. Ceremonies of 201-500 people at outdoor venues will be limited to 33 percent of capacity and small-scale ceremonies of up to 200 people or 2 attendees per student at outdoor venues will be limited to 50 percent of capacity. Indoor ceremonies will also be allowed, but with much lower capacities.

Stec, along with Assembly members Billy Jones, Matt Simpson, Robert Smullen and Carrie Woerner, sent a letter to Cuomo on March 18 requesting the administration begin discussions with public health officials, the New York State School Boards Association, New York State Council of School Superintendents, SUNY, the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities in New York.

In the letter, the state lawmakers wrote: "The sooner they have a sense of what may be possible regarding graduations this year, the better for them as they will need to consider many factors. Early planning will help ensure this year's graduations are fitting of this special and memorable occasion."