

Dear Senator Schumer / Gillibrand / Members of NY's Delegation,

We write to you as New York State Senators to urge you to include the economic impact of college closures in any federal stimulus in response to Covid-19. We strongly support the decisions of colleges and universities to transition temporarily to virtual learning. At the same time, these closings will hit the local economies on and near campuses, as students will not be frequenting local businesses, spring events will be cancelled, and families will most likely not be converging on college towns for graduation. This will mean lost jobs, lost shifts, and lost income for many New York workers. As you and your colleagues consider possible stimulus and financial mitigation efforts to support communities in the wake of Covid-19, we urge you to address the needs of New York's college towns.

New York is home to the most robust higher education system in the country, with SUNY, CUNY, and many private colleges engaged in the work of producing knowledge. These colleges and universities are anchor institutions in their communities. Each is a powerful economic engine, and together they employ more than 260,000 faculty, staff, and student workers. The SUNY and CUNY systems administer 47 four-year colleges and graduate schools, with more than 400,000 students pursuing degrees. Another 500,000 students attend the more than 100 private colleges and universities across the state. Each campus also supports many jobs in the construction, housing, retail, and service industries.

A prime reason for curtailing on-campus instruction is to prevent students from dispersing for spring break and then returning to campus, potentially carrying coronavirus into the campus and local community. These institutions are sacrificing a major portion of their academic calendar and students experience in the interest of mitigating the virus and slowing its spread, which is a laudable goal. But it will take a toll on communities across the state, especially in areas where the local college or university is the primary employer and a major driver of economic activity. For these reasons, we urge you to work with your colleagues from other states who also represent colleges and universities, to identify strategies to mitigate the economic shock to these communities and ensure that low-paid workers and small businesses do not suffer during these difficult times.

Sincerely,

Rachel May,

New York State Senator, 53rd District

(Syracuse University, Colgate University, SUNY Upstate, SUNY-ESF, SUNY Morrisville, SUNY Oswego-Downtown, Le Moyne College, Hamilton College, Cazenovia College)