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**THE SENATE
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ALBANY 12247**

**JOHN J. FLANAGAN
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January 17, 2020

James L. Tomarken, MD, MPH, MBA, MSW
Office of the Commissioner
Suffolk County Department of Health Services
3500 Sunrise Highway, Suite 124
P.O. Box 9006
Great River, New York 11739-9006

Dear Commissioner Tomarken:

We write on behalf of the children, families and staff of Northport Middle School who were recently informed by school district officials of the presence of excessive mercury levels in recent soil tests conducted in an underground leaching cesspool immediately outside and adjacent to several classrooms. While district officials report no detectable levels of mercury vapor inside abutting classrooms and hallway areas, they have chosen to keep those areas closed for now out of an abundance of caution.

As you know, the effects of mercury exposure on a person's health can be extremely serious and potentially fatal, depending on the form of mercury, the amount, type and length of exposure, and the age and health condition of the person exposed. To that end, it is our understanding Suffolk County Department of Health Services is the lead agency to manage the remediation plan of the leaching pool at Northport Middle School upon receipt of a final report from the school district's environmental consulting firm, PW Grosser Consulting.

As with any environmental contamination, the importance of providing accurate, current and reliable information to the public cannot be overstated. Anyone who has been potentially exposed deserves to know the health risks associated with the contamination and the actions being taken to remediate the area. We would therefore respectfully request your assistance in providing our office with immediate as well as periodic updates of this disturbing and developing situation. In addition, we also ask that you provide the general public with contact information for the appropriate official within your agency to answer any questions or concerns the community may have.

Enclosed is a recent letter from my colleague, Senator James Gaughran, whose district includes the physical location of the Northport Middle School calling on the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation to conduct a full investigation of the mercury detection. Should there be involvement of any other state or local agency on this matter, we would appreciate knowing this information at your earliest convenience.

Thank you in advance for your attention to addressing this very important environmental concern affecting our mutual constituents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Flanagan".

John J. Flanagan

cc: Honorable James F. Gaughran
New York State Senate