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**THE SENATE
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**ROBERT G. ORTT
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August 17, 2022

Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor
The State of New York
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

As you may know, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently updated its guidance to better reflect the progress made after understanding and combating the COVID-19 virus. Most notably, the CDC now recommends that those exposed to COVID-19 are no longer required to quarantine, regardless of vaccination status. Additionally, the CDC has also removed prior recommendations for social distancing and test-to-stay procedures in K through 12 schools and early childhood programs. Per the CDC, the new guidelines “help us to move to a point where COVID-19 no longer severely disrupts our daily lives.”

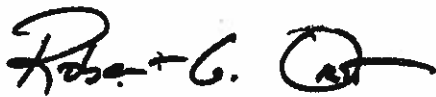
While this is most welcome news for the country, here in New York, we continue to operate under outdated and burdensome guidelines that do not reflect the CDC’s recent changes away from broad-based restrictive measures with the focus more on reducing severe infection from COVID-19. Just this week, you again extended the State Disaster Emergency due to COVID-19 with little justification in the Executive Order for its continuation. In addition, the Department of Health continues to renew outdated emergency regulations and guidance related to COVID-19 and has yet to release updated guidelines for this upcoming school year.

Regrettably, your administration has failed to adopt policies that address the ever-changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, you have an opportunity to proactively provide reasonable and responsible guidelines for our schools in a timely manner, so children, parents and administrators are not scrambling under conflicting

state and federal guidelines. I strongly encourage your administration to release this guidance immediately to give school districts more than a couple days to prepare, as occurred in 2021.

Additionally, I strongly urge you to adopt the shift in approach taken by the CDC and update state guidance and emergency regulations to reflect its change in strategy in general. New Yorkers have suffered under this pandemic for over two years, and it is long overdue that our policies focus on protecting the most vulnerable from serious illness rather than broad restrictions on the public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert G. Ort" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert G. Ort
NYS Senate Minority Leader

Cc: Commissioner Mary Bassett, New York State Department of Health