



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

August 26, 2022

Dear U.S. Senators and Members of the New York Congressional Delegation:

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. Per the CDC, the new guidelines “help us to move to a point where COVID-19 no longer severely disrupts our daily lives.”

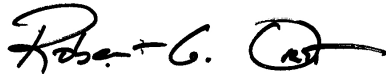
A return to normalcy is long overdue, but New Yorkers deserve so much more after over two years of living under pandemic restrictions, some of which cost them their livelihood. We continue to face shortages in the fields that are critical to our residents’ well-being, including our law enforcement, firefighters, teachers and healthcare workers. We are sure we can all agree that we must do everything we can to advocate for these essential workers.

Just last week, CDC Director Rochelle Walensky admitted the agency’s actions throughout the pandemic “fell short in many ways” and “had some pretty public mistakes. . .” She then announced an agency reset aimed at improving CDC operations during public health emergencies, including how the agency develops public health guidance. It is crucial that this reset include a reevaluation of executive agency regulations made permanent or still in effect related to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly 86 FR 61555 entitled “Medicare and Medicaid Programs; Omnibus COVID-19 Health Care Staff Vaccination.”

We have seen and heard firsthand how the healthcare workforce shortage is substantially affecting patient care, increasing healthcare costs and jeopardizing New York’s healthcare infrastructure. Governor Hochul first declared a Statewide Disaster Emergency Due to Healthcare Staffing Shortages on September 27, 2021 and continues to extend it to date. Even with final acknowledgement of this crisis, the state and federal governments continued implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine mandate on healthcare personnel. Dedicated healthcare workers not only unjustly lost their livelihoods after giving so much throughout the pandemic, but this only exacerbated the emergency in the state. Reevaluating mandates such as these, given the new CDC guidelines and the Director’s admission of mistakes, is crucial as we move out of the pandemic and glean wisdom from this horrendous experience.

We strongly urge your partnered advocacy in standing up for our displaced healthcare workers following the easing of CDC guidelines. We will continue to advocate for reevaluation of this mandate here in New York as the Governor moves forward with an assessment of the State’s COVID-19 response and urge you to do the same at the federal level. We must not allow ineffective decisions made at the height of the pandemic to continue to negatively affect our healthcare sector. We look forward to an opportunity to work with you on behalf of all our heroes.

Sincerely,



Robert G. Ort
Senate Minority Leader
62nd District



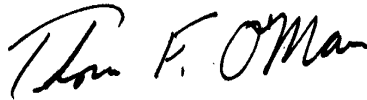
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24th District



Senator Peter Oberacker
51st District



Senator Fred Akshar
52nd District



Senator Tom O'Mara
58th District



Senator Daphne Jordan
43rd District



Senator Mike Martucci
42nd District



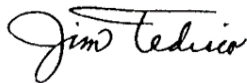
Senator Anthony Palumbo
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Senator George Borrello
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Senator Jim Tedisco
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Senator Phil Boyle
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Senator Patty Ritchie
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