

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



SUSAN SERINO
41ST District

ALBANY OFFICE
ROOM 613
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
(518) 455-2945
DISTRICT OFFICE
4254 ALBANY POST ROAD
HYDE PARK, NEW YORK 12538
(845) 229-0106
PUTNAM OFFICE
117 TOWN PARK LANE
PUTNAM VALLEY, NEW YORK 10579
(845) 528-0417

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

AGING
SOCIAL SERVICES

COMMITTEE MEMBER

CHILDREN & FAMILIES
INSURANCE
MENTAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

June 18, 2020

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As you have noted a number of times, a clear lesson we are all learning from this pandemic pertains to the importance of preparedness. In that vein, we must immediately address the urgent and persistent issues caused by a lack of access to broadband, particularly in rural communities throughout the State.

Part of the stated goals for your Reimagine Education Advisory Council include ensuring schools and colleges “prepare to adopt technological and other innovations to safely reopen,” as well as utilizing virtual learning to “bridge the gap,” and “supplement face to face education when schools reopen.” **While this pandemic has shown us that there is no true substitute for in-person education,** it is clear now more than ever that access to fast, reliable Internet is necessary for our students’ education in the event that any ‘second wave’ does hit our state as currently predicted. Unfortunately, too many students—particularly those in rural communities, especially Upstate—do not have reliable Internet access, which is why investing in broadband in these communities now is a critical component of ensuring access to quality education.

As you know, in 2015, the State committed \$500 million in an effort to secure broadband access statewide by 2018. While broadband access has certainly been expanded for many New Yorkers, unfortunately there are still far too many who have been left behind. I respectfully request that you make the expansion of broadband access to these communities an area of focus for any plans to reopen schools, as well as make such expansion an urgent priority during the summer months, potentially using funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020, in light of how the pandemic exacerbates the need for these communities to have reliable Internet access.

As we actively prepare for the start of the 2020-2021 academic year, we must do all we can to ensure our communities and school districts have access to the tools they need to respond rapidly and effectively to any necessary policy changes, and that includes consistent access to effective broadband.

Please know that I stand ready to assist you on this effort, and I appreciate your attention to this urgent request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sue Serino".

Sue Serino
New York State Senator
41st District