

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

May 9, 2020

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

Dear Governor Cuomo:

This week you announced the creation of your ‘Reimagine Education Advisory Council’ with the stated goal of helping school districts prepare to safely reopen, bridge the digital divide and “supplement face to face education.” While I thank you for taking steps to ensure that our districts will have the resources they need to safely bring students back into the classroom when the time is right, I write today to urge you to include additional representation from Hudson Valley school districts on your Council.

As I am sure you would agree, we cannot take a one-size-fits-all approach to education in the best of times, and we certainly cannot do so now. Your Advisory Council includes representatives from Central New York, Capital Region, Long Island, and New York City school districts, but not the Mid and Lower Hudson Valley. Hudson Valley educators and students—specifically those from my Senate District, which encompasses most of Dutchess and parts of Putnam counties—bring a unique and diverse perspective to this conversation that deserves to be heard. The 41st Senate District is home to Pre-K-12 school districts that include small city school districts, rural districts, a successful community school model and more.

Educators from across my community have expressed great concern following your comments on this subject, which seemed to imply that “reimagining” our education system could mean incorporating significantly more technology in place of in-person education. While technology certainly has a role to play in preparing our students for an ever-evolving economy, if there’s one thing we have learned from this pandemic, it is that there truly is no substitute for the kind of in-person education that New York’s teachers provide.

Throughout this tough time, teachers continue to step up, effectively taking on all the challenges that this pandemic has thrown at them, and in doing so they are providing crucial support not only to our students, but to their families and our communities as well. Not only are they logging countless hours facilitating distance learning, they are also dedicating tremendous energy to overhauling their lesson plans and creating dynamic programming that keeps students engaged in an unprecedented learning environment. In addition, our teachers are designing unique workarounds to bridge the digital divide where it exists, running food pantries and meal delivery services, keeping community leaders informed, troubleshooting urgent and unprecedented problems, organizing morale boosting events for students and communities and so much more.

As our educators continue to play such an invaluable role here in our community and across the state, we want to ensure that their voices are heard clearly throughout the reopening planning process.

I thank you for your consideration of this request. Please know, I stand ready to assist you in connecting with our local educators. If you have questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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

Sue Serino
New York State Senator
41st District