

**A RESOLUTION TO BE SUBMITTED BY
LEGISLATOR GREENE**

Re: Calling for the Erie County Health Department to Reduce the Six Foot Distancing Guidelines to Help Get Students Back in School

WHEREAS, Erie County's students have been attending school in some virtual learning capacity since March of last year; and

WHEREAS, virtual learning has been very difficult on students, parents, and teachers; and

WHEREAS, many students have struggled with the new form of learning, especially the younger students who have not yet developed the ability to focus on one task for several continuous hours; and

WHEREAS, parents are having to work from home, when possible, while simultaneously caring their children. Those that do not have the ability to work from home have been forced to send their children to virtual learning centers, often at tremendous personal expense; and

WHEREAS, further, our teachers have been forced to work from a distance making it difficult, if not impossible, to teach individual students; especially younger students who do not have the attention span to sit in front of a computer for hours on end; and

WHEREAS, many children have been without peer-level social interaction for the better part of a year. The lack of social interact is proving to be tremendously detrimental to their mental well-being, raising concerns of an increase in adolescent suicide; and

WHEREAS, the current guidelines require all people, including students, to maintain six feet of separation between each other at all times. This distance makes it very difficult and expensive to physically bring students back into the classroom; and

WHEREAS, the County Executive has stated that Erie County is "following the CDC standard, the New York State Department of Health standard" but has not taken a position on changing that standard to meet more recent medical opinions that three feet is sufficient for students in school; and

WHEREAS, with proper precautions, including temperature checks, required hand washing, and masking, some school districts, including here in New York, are finding it possible to decrease the social distancing requirements and allow children to come back to school safely; and

WHEREAS, Onondaga County's health department has made the decision to allow schools to reopen with only three feet of social distancing space, which is the normal spacing

between desks. This change would allow all students to be able to return to class on a full time basis. Erie County's Health department should review the available data and, if possible, revise their current guidance.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT

RESOLVED, that this honorable body recognizes the importance of in-person attendance for thousands of students here in Erie County; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that this honorable body places a high priority on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of Erie County's teachers, students, and parents; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that this honorable body hereby urges the Erie County Health Department to review the six foot social distancing rule and the feasibility of decreasing the guidelines to three feet for the purpose of returning students to school; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that certified copies of this resolution be forwarded to the Commissioner of the Erie County Health Department, the Erie County Executive, and any other party deemed necessary and proper.

Fiscal Impact: None