



## *Office of the County Executive*

Monroe County, New York

**Adam J. Bello**  
*County Executive*

March 19, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of the State of New York  
Executive Chamber  
New York State Capitol  
Albany, NY 12224

Dr. Howard Zucker, M.D., J.D.  
Commissioner of Health, NY State  
Corning Tower  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12237

Dear Governor Cuomo and Dr. Zucker:

On March 19, 2021, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control issued new physical distancing guidelines for schools, saying that scientific inquiry has now shown that students may safely be allowed to sit 3 feet apart in classrooms as long as other COVID-19 mitigation measures, including universal masking, are in place. Notably, the updated CDC guidelines do not require physical barriers to be in place for students to safely sit at the 3 foot distance, something that is currently required by the New York State guidelines.

The CDC's new guidance recommends this distancing modification be in place for all elementary, middle and high schools where community transmission is low, moderate or substantial; and in elementary schools where community transmission is high. In middle and high schools where community transmission is high and cohorting is not possible, the recommendation remains at 6 feet of physical distance.

Given the overwhelming importance of reopening schools in Monroe County, we urge New York State to expedite adoption of the new CDC guidelines in full. It is clear that our students need to return to in-person instruction where it is safe to do so. Adopting these new CDC guidelines for New York State will give our schools the flexibility and latitude they need in order to bring our students back to their classrooms for in-person learning.

As you know, the safety of our students and school staff is of the utmost importance. Our community has made great strides toward full vaccination of teaching and other school staff, and our current overall transmission rates would allow our elementary schools to fully reopen soon if they were subject to the new guidelines.

We believe adoption of the CDC guidelines in full for New York State would provide our school districts with the clarity and detail they require to move forward with reopening while we continue our ongoing efforts to vaccinate the community and reduce overall community transmission.

Thank you for your consideration,



Adam J. Bello  
Monroe County Executive



**Dr. Michael Mendoza**  
Monroe County Commissioner  
of Public Health