



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Calling on NYC Schools Chancellor To Act

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The NYC Schools Chancellor issued a statement to parents and teachers concerning the coronavirus in which he emphasized guidance “to fight stigma and bias around the coronavirus.” Incredibly, he seems to be more concerned about what we call the virus, than safeguarding our children. This is DANGEROUSLY STUPID. Ironically, he is the same person who wants to penalize Asian-American students in NYC for performing so well on high school entrance exams.

Together with every Democrat and Republican elected lawmaker on Staten Island (led by BP James Oddo), I have been calling on the City to close our public schools. Every new case that occurs in K through 12 classrooms, means that dozens of students and teachers have already been exposed. Those then expose dozens more. Unfortunately, our schools provide the most fertile conditions for the spread of virus. The Chancellor must act immediately, for it will soon be too late, if not already.

I understand that closing schools presents other challenges and inconveniences with respect to day care, meals and so forth. We can address these problems, but dealing with these issues is nothing compared to a full-fledged outbreak across our 1.1 million student population. Spring break is soon, and somehow we will all cope with that closure, as always. Furthermore, if the virus is not contained by closing schools, infected students will be home or worse anyway.

President Trump took bold steps to cut travel from China long before the Chancellor even talked about the virus. That step together with closing travel from Europe means that we are not already confronted with millions of cases in America. Governor Cuomo took decisive action to close SUNY colleges and other large gatherings across our State. These actions no doubt cause inconvenience, but are critically important if we are to contain the virus and spare millions of people from becoming infected. I commend both President Trump and Governor Cuomo for making these difficult and unpopular decisions, which is the mark of true leadership.

Sadly, if the NYC Chancellor does not close schools, the effectiveness of the above mentioned measures advanced by the President and our Governor may be greatly diminished. This is because our schools will provide a fast-lane for the virus around the actions of President Trump and Governor Cuomo. Another argument against closure by the Chancellor's office seems to be the concern that students will commit crimes if let out from school. Do they

really hold our children in such low regard? Could you imagine what would happen if President Trump said that about our children in NYC?

Please join me and tell Chancellor Carranza to dispense with the politics and protect our students and teachers by closing the schools before it is too late. The safety of our children and neighbors across New York must be our first priority. It may not be too late to blunt the curve on the coronavirus pandemic here in New York, but the clock is ticking. We need leadership and action - not political posturing.