



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George M. Borrello

## Senator Borrello and Assemblyman Goodell Support Teacher-Based Education

GEORGE M. BORRELLO May 20, 2020

| ISSUE: **EDUCATION, DISTANCE LEARNING, SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS**

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JAMESTOWN, NY – Senator George Borrello and Assemblyman Andy Goodell, in a letter to Governor Cuomo, reaffirmed their strong support for teacher-based classroom education and expressed their concern over the governor’s call to “reimagine” education based on a greater reliance on computers and distance learning.

Governor Cuomo announced a partnership with Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft computer systems, to develop a greater reliance on computer-based learning. “While such a partnership may help multi-billionaire Bill Gates earn even more money at the expense of New York taxpayers, it is not necessarily good for our students,” noted Senator Borrello.

“Online learning simply does not compare to the quality of the education provided directly to students by highly capable and dedicated teachers and staff,” said Senator Borrello.

“Technology is a valuable educational tool, but it is best used as a supplement and not a replacement for in-person teaching.”

“Nothing beats the learning that occurs when great teachers provide personal attention and guidance to their students,” said Assemblyman Goodell. “Personal attention is especially important for special needs students. Intensive teaching and instruction is critical for any meaningful learning or educational progress to occur.

“Many parents of special needs students are seeing their children’s hard-won educational and social gains falter as their prolonged absence from school continues. For these students, it is essential that they return to personalized instruction as soon as possible,” said Assemblyman Goodell.

“The teachers and administrators I’ve spoken with are gravely concerned about the negative impact of the shutdown on students’ educational progress and retention. Ambitious lesson plans and new concepts had to be shelved as schools were forced to adapt quickly to a remote learning program,” said Senator Borrello.

Senator Borrello noted that research on the effectiveness of online learning at the K-12 grade levels has consistently found it is less effective in furthering student learning and success. The gap is even more pronounced among lower-performing students, who do significantly

worse in online courses than in a traditional classroom setting.

The legislators also underscored the dangers of a continuing shutdown on at-risk students.

“Superintendents across my district have reported that once schools were closed, some children effectively ‘dropped off the map’ and were unreachable by email, phone or other means. For these children, their education effectively stopped at that point and concerns about their safety and welfare increased,” said Senator Borrello. “The reality is that school is the safest place in the lives of many young people.”

They stressed the important socialization role that schools perform which “promotes the importance of being an active part of a community.” They also noted that rural districts are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to online learning as the lack of devices in many smaller rural school districts as well as the lack of broadband access in the homes of many students are stumbling blocks to online lessons and assignments.

Senator Borrello and Assemblyman Goodell concluded their letter by urging the Governor to resist movement towards a remote learning model and to return students to the classroom this fall.

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