



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Tedisco

Tedisco, Santabarbara and Walsh Call on Governor to Help Schools with COVID-19 Testing in Advance of School Openings

SENATOR JIM TEDISCO August 6, 2020

NEW YORK STATE
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As schools across New York State prepare for a new school year with the potential of returning to some form of in-person education, we write to you requesting that the state develop a plan for COVID-19 testing for those individuals who will be in our school buildings and not place that burden on our local school districts.

Many of the parents of students, teachers and school staff and administrators that we represent understandably have concerns about going back to in-person learning in September. As you know, school districts are now planning for a hybrid model of some in-person learning mixed with remote, distance learning. These schools are formulating and submitting plans to ensure, as best as possible, social distancing, mask wearing, installing building modifications such as sneeze guards, and adhering to all the CDC safety guidelines to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

We believe that requiring each school district to develop their own plan to conduct COVID-19 tests with our local county health departments would be very burdensome to have in place in the next few weeks. School districts are strapped for funding already because of the COVID-19 crisis. Any testing plan should be paid for by the state, hopefully with assistance from the federal government.

That's why we respectfully ask your Administration to formulate a plan for the state Department of Health (DOH) to assist our school districts in establishing a random testing model. For instance, DOH could implement on a statewide basis, pool testing such as the kind that Saratoga Hospital is now using. The results

As schools across New York State prepare for a new school year and the potential of returning to some form of in-person education, Senator Jim Tedisco (R,C,I-Glenville), Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara (D,C,I-Rotterdam) and Assemblywoman Mary Beth Walsh (R,C,I-Ballston) today are calling on Governor Andrew Cuomo to develop a statewide COVID-19 testing plan for those individuals who will be in school buildings and not place the cost of that burden on local school districts.

School districts are now planning for a hybrid model of some in-person learning mixed with remote, distance learning. These schools are formulating and submitting plans to ensure, as best as possible, social distancing, mask wearing, installing building modifications such as sneeze guards, and adhering to all the CDC safety guidelines to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Requiring each school district to develop their own plan to conduct COVID-19 tests with local county health departments will be very burdensome to have in place in the next few weeks.

Tedisco, Santabarbara and Walsh are requesting (**see attached letter**) that the Administration formulate a plan for the state Department of Health (DOH) to assist local school districts in establishing a random testing model. For instance, DOH could implement on a statewide basis, [state-funded pool testing such as the kind that Saratoga Hospital is now using](#). The results of pool testing will be quicker, enable health care facilities to conserve testing supplies, save education dollars, and help give people peace of mind and keep them safe.

“Many of the parents of students, teachers and school staff and administrators that we represent understandably have concerns about going back to in-person learning in September. School districts are strapped for funding already because of the COVID-19 crisis. Any testing plan should be paid for by the state, hopefully with assistance from the federal government. If schools reopen this fall, then the state needs to step-up and provide greater guidance and support when it comes to COVID-19 testing,” said Senator Jim Tedisco, a former special education teacher, guidance counselor, athletic director and coach.

“When it comes to re-opening schools we must do all that we can to safeguard the health and well-being of not only our students, but also our teachers, staff and all those involved in public education,” said Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara. “With the start of school quickly approaching, establishing an effective statewide testing model for COVID-19 in our local schools and providing the funding needed to implement it should be the top priority for the

Governor and state Department of Health. In combination with contact tracing and isolation, these best practices can help identify young people who are infected early, many of whom can be infected without even knowing it, and prevent COVID-19 from spreading in our community.”

“Our schools are already strapped financially and working hard to ensure that their plans for September, whether virtual, in person or a hybrid of both, are safe, sound and responsible,” said Assemblywoman Mary Beth Walsh. “As administrators, teachers, parents and students prepare for whatever the fall holds, I believe that it is critical for the state and state health department to take the lead on developing and implementing COVID-19 testing should the decision be made to allow some form of in-person instruction in our school districts.”