



NEW JERSEY SENATE

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Governor Phil Murphy
225 W State St
Trenton, NJ 08625

August 17, 2020

Dear Governor Murphy,

I am writing today on behalf of parents, teachers and administrators around the state, who are deeply concerned as they watch their school districts desperately try to balance the need to provide a thorough and efficient education to every child, adhere to all Executive Orders and ensure the safety of all students, teachers and staff. School districts have spent months planning for opening in September but the last minute changes in rules and regulations have left them scrambling to comply.

Everyone agrees that in-person learning is the ultimate goal but without clear quantifiable guidelines or time to collect the proper supplies, to put students in the classroom in September would not be responsible. I ask that you immediately move to all virtual learning in New Jersey until data and a proper level of preparedness can ensure a safe return.

We have nothing open that requires being inside for an extended period of time, no movie theaters, no gyms, not even indoor dining— it's inconceivable that we would have our students and teachers be the guinea pigs for extended indoor exposure. If it's unsafe to have indoor dining it's unsafe to have schools open. The decision to open schools holds people's lives in the balance — it must be done safely or not at all.

For anyone following the frantic and chaotic situation unfolding statewide, it is clear that the whole process needs to slow down and districts need more time to prepare. We need only to look to Georgia, a state that went back to school in-person too quickly and within a week had to shut everything down only to start back from square one, to know that opening too soon endangers everyone and only stands to further delay the process.

Our students, their parents and our educators need to know that they are in a safe, controlled and comfortable environment when they return to the classroom. The widespread confusion and the

rapid approach of Labor Day has created an environment that is ripe for mistakes, missteps and mistrust. Couple this confusion with the certainty of a second wave, as predicted by all public health officials including Dr. Fauci, and it would be dangerously irresponsible to allow school to start in September.

None of this has been easy but I do not want New Jersey to be a second Georgia. Lives are at stake Governor and if our schools open in this confusion, I fear that one sick student or one sick teacher could erase everything we have been working towards these past six months.

If my office can be of any help, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Dawn Marie Addiego
New Jersey State Senator
Legislative District 8

cc.

Marie Blistan, President of the New Jersey Education Association
Anthony Rizzo, President of the Burlington Education Association
Danielle M. Clark, President of Camden County Council of Education Associations
Dr. Richard Bozza, Executive Director of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators
Patricia Wright, Executive Director of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association
Barbara Rheault, President of the Atlantic County Council of Education Associations