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## SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dr. Patrick Harrigan

June 7, 2021

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

Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.  
Commissioner of Health  
New York State Department of Health  
Empire State Plaza,  
Corning Tower  
Albany, New York 12237

Dear Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Zucker:

On behalf of the Half Hollow Hills Board of Education, district administration team, faculty, staff, and the students and families that we serve, we want to take this opportunity to thank you and your teams for your hard work and partnership over the last 15 months in helping us to provide for the safe reopening of our schools. In Half Hollow Hills, we are proud to have reopened in July of 2020 for our summer program for students with special needs, returned to five days per week of in-person instruction for elementary students on the first day of school, and successfully transitioned to five days per week of in-person instruction for secondary students after the winter surge in COVID-19 cases had passed.

During the early days of June, we have seen record-low positivity rates across New York, along with significantly decreasing positivity rates in Suffolk County and our community. We have not had a positive case reported to our district since May 26 from our approximately 7,600 students or 2,000 staff members. In our district, we have hosted vaccination sites with the Suffolk County Department of Health Services and offered weekly testing for our students, staff and community. With recognition of this data and the ongoing changes in policy to reopen our state, we respectfully ask that you revisit and update the guidance for K-12 education. Adjustments to the guidance now will make a positive impact for all students immediately and for the 2021-2022 academic year beginning in the fall.

In terms of immediate needs, we request that you remove the requirement of wearing masks outdoors for recess, physical education and outdoor learning, consistent with changes that have been made in mask requirements for other areas of the community and summer camps. Please understand that this change will not just have an impact on this final month of the 2020-2021 school year, as we will have more than 400 students in summer learning activities that will include physical education and intramurals in July and August.

For the upcoming school year in the fall, we need your assistance and input in a number of critical areas so we can adequately prepare for our instructional program.

- Please give school districts a definitive decision on remote learning requirements for the fall for funding, student scheduling and staffing purposes. We recommend that remote learning be offered only when medically necessary.
- In terms of transportation, we need to return to having more students allowed on buses, as the current model requires extended time for arrival and dismissal, which lessens instructional time and creates a burden for some parents.
- In our cafeterias, we require the removal of the six-foot social distancing requirements. Elementary classes are already cohorting, so please allow them to return to the use of our cafeterias during meals, regaining some normalcy and opportunities for socialization.
- Contact tracing and quarantining guidelines need to be updated and aligned to the recommendation of three feet for social distancing, rather than the current six-foot metric being used. There has not been significant spread in schools, and the quarantining based on a six-foot rule drastically increases quarantines and disrupts instruction.
- Lastly, please align the mask wearing requirements for the next school year with other areas of the community that our faculty are already interacting in and the daycare and summer camps that students will experience, so they regain some consistency in their lives.

Thank you in advance for considering our requests, and doing what is best for the children and families that we serve.

Sincerely,



Eric Geringswald, President  
Half Hollow Hills Board of Education



Dr. Patrick Harrigan, Superintendent  
Half Hollow Hills Central School District

cc: Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention