



THE LEGISLATURE  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY

February 19, 2021

Hon. Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of the State of New York  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, NYS Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

Howard Zucker, M.D., J.D.  
Commissioner of the Department of Health  
Empire Plaza, Corning Towner  
State Street  
Albany, New York 12203

Betty A. Rosa, Ed. D  
Commissioner of the State Education Department  
New York State Education Building  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12234

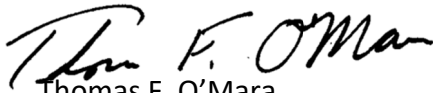
Dear Governor Cuomo, Commissioner Zucker, and Commissioner Rosa:

We believe that performing arts and music education are vital to provide a rich and well-rounded curriculum for New York students. Singing, instrument playing, acting, spoken word and dancing are all important for student learning and artistic expression. We are writing to advocate for our Southern Tier and Finger Lakes constituents to urge the state to lift the excessive restrictions on the performing arts such as the 12x12-foot distancing rule for the arts. We encourage the state to adopt guidelines grounded in ongoing scientific research.

A study commissioned by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA), along with more than 125 partnered performing arts organizations and headed up by research teams at the University of Colorado and the University of Maryland have been providing practical and safe guidance to performing arts educators and schools. The study found that if participants are properly fitted with surgical masks, and for instrumentalists' masks with a mouthpiece slit and appropriate bell cover for the instrument, aerosol emissions are reduced by 60 and 90 percent, depending on the instrument and voice type and usage (theater versus singing). Their continued research indicates that the distancing guidelines should follow 6x6 feet distancing (9x6 feet for trombonists), which will allow more student participation. We encourage you to review the study here: <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/unprecedented-international-coalition-led-by-performing-arts-organizations-to-commission-covid-19-study/>.

We have seen the positive impact of lifting excessive restrictions on school athletics on our children. Performing arts education and activities should be given the same consideration. Programs of enrichment such as the performing arts provide an outlet for expression and enjoyment for New York children who have bravely faced a world entirely changed by COVID-19. If we can provide some normalcy and activities that are good for their emotional and mental well-being, this will be a great benefit to our students, families, and our communities as a whole.

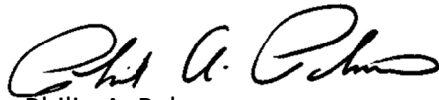
Sincerely,



Thomas F. O'Mara  
NYS Senator  
58<sup>th</sup> District



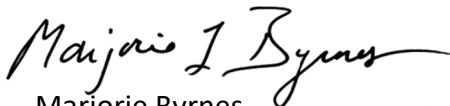
Fred Akshar  
NYS Senator  
52<sup>nd</sup> District



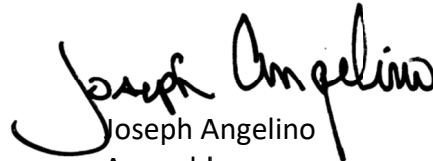
Philip A. Palmesano  
Assemblyman  
132<sup>nd</sup> District



Christopher S. Friend  
Assemblyman  
124<sup>th</sup> District



Marjorie Byrnes  
Assemblywoman  
133<sup>rd</sup> District



Joseph Angelino  
Assemblyman  
122<sup>nd</sup> District