



ANGELO SANTABARBARA
Assemblyman 111th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

CHAIR
Subcommittee on Autism
Spectrum Disorders
COMMITTEES
Agriculture
Energy
Governmental Employees
Mental Health
Racing and Wagering
Veterans' Affairs

May 22nd, 2020

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

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I write regarding your decision to allow summer school classes to continue only through distance learning this year. With this decision, I ask you to consider the ability of school districts to support their students with disabilities with all lessons online. Statistics show that these students are less likely to be able to access online education and are also at much greater risk of falling behind.

Some schools have classes with high needs special education kids, including students who are deaf or hard of hearing, students who have visual impairments, students who have multiple disabilities and some that cannot use computers independently. This population will likely not be able to receive online education without individualized supervision.

For others, the transition has proven especially difficult for parents that are not able to assist their child or loved one at home. From personal experience with my son Michael who has autism, on-line instruction is more successful when somebody is able to work with him consistently. However, I assure you that there are thousands of parents and teachers who share this same experience.

With plans for the beginning of the new school year in the fall still undecided, if school buildings remain closed but continue to provide instruction, plans must include options and alternatives that ensure these students receive the services outlined in their individualized education or medical plans. Schools must provide students with disabilities with a "free and appropriate public education", including on-line instruction. We have an obligation to meet even under these circumstances. Please do all that you can to provide the flexibility needed to serve the educational needs of this population.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara
Assembly Chair of the Sub-Committee on Autism Spectrum Disorders