



**LOWER HUDSON EDUCATION COALITION**

450 Mamaroneck Ave, Harrison, NY 10528 • (914) 345-8737 • [www.lhec.org](http://www.lhec.org) • [lhec@lhec.org](mailto:lhec@lhec.org)

October 2, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12244

Dear Governor Cuomo,

On behalf of the member districts of the Lower Hudson Education Coalition (LHEC), which is a joint project of the Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents, Dutchess County School Boards Association, Rockland County School Boards Association and Westchester Putnam School Boards Association, we wish to raise concern with school buildings being designated as polling locations for the upcoming General Election on November 3, 2020.

When schools are used as polling locations, they are open to the public and school districts are unable to monitor who has access to their facilities or the number of people who enter their buildings. These concerns have only been heightened due to COVID-19, and have led to many school districts wishing to be exempted from having their facilities used as polling locations.

Current election law allows for public buildings, except for school district buildings, to file a written request for cancellation as a polling location. School districts do not have any recourse when they are designated a polling location, they must provide space. To this end, LHEC requests that school districts have the ability to decline their designation as a polling location, due to health and safety concerns, for the upcoming General Election.

School districts across the state are working tirelessly to ensure the safety of their students and staff in these unprecedented times. In order to provide safe learning environments, school buildings have become creative, utilizing large spaces for instructional purposes to ensure social distancing. This includes auditoriums, cafeterias, and gymnasiums – which are the traditional spaces utilized as polling locations.

If a school is used as a polling location, this would require districts to either reconfigure their instructional spaces for Election Day or close down the school building that day, giving up much-needed instructional time. Furthermore, the polling space would need to be disinfected after the polls close at 9 PM, but before classes resume early the next morning.

Additionally, school districts have implemented a variety of safety protocols in order to help stop the spread and protect the health and safety of the individuals within the



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building. These measures include, but are not limited to, no visitor policies, temperature checks, screening questions, and recording the names of everyone who enters the building for contact tracing purposes. A majority of these procedures would come into direct conflict with board of elections regulations.

The threat of COVID-19 is still very real, and the benefits of using a school building as a polling location do not outweigh the risks of thousands of voters entering the building unchecked. Providing school districts the ability to appeal their designation allows them the ability put the safety and health of their students, staff and community first, not the needs of local boards of elections.

Sincerely,

Members of the Lower Hudson Education Coalition

Cc: Dr. Howard Zucker, Commissioner of Health  
Dr. Betty Rosa, Interim Commissioner of Education  
Todd D. Valentine and Robert A. Brehm, Co-Executive Directors New York State Board of Elections  
Dan Fuller, Deputy Secretary for Education