



OP-ED: Hwang Weighs in on Draft ‘Back to School’ Plan

On June 25 , Governor Ned Lamont announced an overview of a draft plan to provide guidance for the upcoming 2020-21 school year. I cannot imagine anything further from a summer break for school administrators as they evaluate and plan for the arduous and costly road of readying for the upcoming school year. The state needs to do everything in its power to support our schools and our municipalities so they can be safely open as soon as possible. We also must make sure our schools have all the support: financially and logistically, including any physical construction cost reimbursements that they will need.

The expectations, guidelines and mandates set by the State Department of Education must be workable both logistically and financially. There are a number of major factors to consider in regard to reopening Connecticut schools this fall and local input is essential for the final plan to work effectively.

I am encouraged to learn that districts are being asked to draft plans for partial

reopening in addition to preparing for full attendance this fall. Preparation will be key should schools need to utilize virtual learning in the coming year. Educating students remotely over the past three months presented parents, caregivers and teachers with a whole new set of challenges which need to be considered.

I want to thank Lamont and State Department of Education Commissioner Cardona for drafting this plan and starting the critical and necessary conversation toward school reopening. I am anxious to work with superintendents, boards of education and town leadership to determine if and how they can implement these requirements to the unique needs of each town within the 28th Senate district.

The health and safety of our students, teachers and staff are our paramount priority and focus, and the plan's guidance gives some direction to what changes must be made to accomplish those important goals. I eagerly await the comprehensive draft plan detail expected on June 29. I see the draft plan presentation as the beginning of the conversation, not the final product.

The press conference addressed the concepts to implement a reopening plan for K-12 public schools, and another important topic of discussion for me is reopening Connecticut's colleges and universities. As the ranking minority leader of the legislature's Higher Education and Employment Committee, I am looking forward to being involved in these critical conversations.

The Higher Education and Employment Committee will be holding a virtual public hearing via Zoom on Tuesday, July 14 at noon to discuss strategies for reopening Connecticut's Colleges and Universities. The link to the meeting will be posted to <http://www.senatorhwang.com> as soon as it is available.

State Senator Tony Hwang represents the 28th Senate District in the Connecticut General Assembly. Hwang is Deputy Minority Senate Leader and the ranking legislative leader on the Public Safety and Security Committee and Higher Education & Employment Committees and also serves as a member of the Transportation Committee.