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**Gale A. Brewer, Borough President**

August 6, 2021

Meisha Ross Porter  
Chancellor  
New York City Department of Education  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chancellor Porter:

I am writing to urge the New York City Department of Education (DOE) to seriously reconsider the decision to not provide a remote learning option for students and families during the 2021-2022 academic year.

The option may be needed for the entire school year. However, having an option in place for at least the first half of the year is a prudent response to family and community requests. In addition, we are in a different place in the battle against COVID-19 than we were when it was first announced that there would be no remote option for the upcoming school year.

The need for a remote learning option in response to COVID-19 is illustrated by the following circumstances:

- The Delta variant emerging as the dominant strain of COVID-19 in New York City
- Significantly less than 60% of residents in 3 of New York City's 5 boroughs having received at least 1 shot of COVID-19 vaccines (as of August 4)
- The fact that many children are not yet eligible to be vaccinated, in conjunction with the fact that the Delta variant is highly contagious, is concerning because youth do not seem to be protected the way they were against other strains
- Although 72% of Manhattan residents have received at least 1 dose and 67% are fully vaccinated, those numbers drop significantly in the northern section of the borough ---- almost no zip code north of Central Park has hit the 60% mark in either category, with 10039 & 10037 (North Harlem) below 50%.

Given the DOE's commitment to equity and to curing health disparities along racial and socioeconomic lines, that commitment should include a remote option until the vaccination effort has had an impact on a greater scale. Having a remote option continues to be a necessary component of keeping New York City schools fully open.

Controls can be put in place to ensure that families who require the remote option the most will have access to it.

Lastly, with changes in guidance around social distancing in school buildings, having a remote option for the first half of the school year gives school communities more time to execute plans for the cultivation of the relational trust necessary for families to feel comfortable getting vaccinated and sending their children back to school.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding the feasibility of a remote option for the first half of the upcoming school year. Let me know how I can be fully supportive of your efforts.

Sincerely,



Gale A. Brewer  
Manhattan Borough President

cc: Marisol Rosales, Senior Deputy Chancellor, NYC DOE  
Dr. Danika Rux, Interim Acting Manhattan Executive Superintendent, NYC DOE  
Erika Tobia, Bronx Executive Superintendent, NYC DOE  
Karen Watts, Brooklyn Executive Superintendent, NYC DOE  
Barbara Freeman, Brooklyn Executive Superintendent, NYC DOE  
Mabel Muñoz-Sarduy, Queens Executive Superintendent, NYC DOE  
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