

**OCEAN CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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April 20, 2021

Honorable Gov. Phil Murphy  
Office of the Governor PO Box 001  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

Dear Governor Murphy:

The Ocean City School District and Ocean City community ask that you add school proms and graduation ceremonies to the list of gatherings that are freed from the current 200-person limit for outdoor events. If you cannot grant this request, we ask that you significantly raise the capacity limit to ensure that a school’s full class of seniors can attend prom and graduate together – as one, united group.

Weddings are currently exempt from outdoor capacity limitations, yet proms and graduation ceremonies involve individuals who already interact daily in our schools. There is no added risk in allowing these same students to assemble outdoors for events that will provide them with more traditional school experiences – and lasting memories – in a very untraditional school year. Putting prom and graduation on the calendar will also provide students across the state with a much-needed boost to their mental health.

So many of our students, staff and community members have worked hard to plan a prom that follows mitigation strategies for preventing the spread of COVID-19. That plan assumes that either the outdoor capacity limit will be raised, or that prom will be treated like a wedding and given an exemption. We made this assumption because the outdoor limit was raised last year for graduations, and this year, we are in a better position. We have greater knowledge and experience navigating a world with COVID-19, and, most significantly, we have a growing number of adults and young adults in our community who have received the COVID-19 vaccine.


Please adjust guidance soon so we can move forward to finalize plans for the end-of-year celebrations our students deserve. Prom is the event up first, and many schools have dates on the calendar that are quickly approaching.

Our young people have sacrificed much over the past year, and we look forward to celebrating their resiliency and positivity during this very trying time. Our back-up plans for these events are less than ideal, with our Ocean City seniors opting to move forward with a prom that would only allow 200 of the 325 members of the senior class to attend. Such an event would feel far from celebratory and likely add to students’ stress rather than relieve it.

Trust that your school leaders are overseeing end-of-year plans with great care and responsibility, in the same way they approached a return to our classroom instruction.

Please support us in serving our school communities, and most importantly, our students, by adjusting guidelines to allow for safe proms and graduations that keep classes intact.

Thank you,



Kathleen W. Taylor, Ed.D.  
Superintendent



Joseph S. Clark  
President, Board of Education



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