**Laura Gillen - Candidate for Congress**

**My Fellow Educators,**

 **As we enter the final days of the 2022 midterm election cycle, I am focused on the critical issues we face as a region here on Long Island. As Hempstead Town Supervisor, I advanced a good government agenda, not a partisan agenda. I will continue that important work if elected to Congress by working to get guns off our streets and keeping them out of our schools, addressing our student loan debt crisis and making college more affordable, and working to reduce middle class taxes by repealing the SALT deduction cap. As the only candidate in this race who has never voted to raise your taxes, you can trust me to understand the affordability issues Long Islanders experience every day.**

 **Long Island faces many challenges in the years ahead and I am ready to work hard for you if I am elected to Congress. One issue I am very passionate about is the mental health and substance abuse crisis we face across the country. As educators, we often have a front row view of these issues. Young people are experiencing depression, general anxiety, or other forms of undiagnosed and untreated mental illness. Without treatment, young people turn to harmful behavior in the form of alcohol abuse, drug use, or in the very worst cases, self-harm. This takes an emotional toll on everyone, including educators.**

 **College campuses are rethinking approaches to mental health services, and it is a welcome revolution. The inclusion of group therapy, telehealth options, and peer counseling all have a place in today’s college campus setting. One of my goals, should I be elected to Congress, is to increase funding to public institutions so we can tackle these issues more forcefully. Earmarking federal dollars to bolster mental health and substance abuse programming at institutions like NCC will allow us to help thousands of young people concentrate on their futures and allow professors to focus more of their energy on classroom activities.**

 **As educators, we take our responsibility to our students very seriously, and one of those responsibilities is to make sure that each student can participate in a learning environment free from added stress or pressure. By increasing access to mental health and substance abuse services, adding professional staff to college health and wellness centers, and rethinking ways to meet our students’ needs, we can make college campuses a healthier, more learning friendly environment. This will always be a priority of mine in Congress.**

**Warm Regards,**

**Laura Gillen**