



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Chris Jacobs

Jacobs Says Now is the Time to Deem Horticulture Essential Industry

SENATOR JACOBS April 28, 2020

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(Buffalo, NY) – Calling it a reasonable next step in the effort to get the state’s economy moving again, New York State Senator Chris Jacobs has asked the Governor to add the horticulture industry to the list of essential businesses eligible to operate across the state. In a letter to the Governor, Jacobs specifically identified greenhouses, grass turf growers and landscaping operations as services that should be able to get back to work.

“The very nature of the work this industry perform lends to the ability of its employees to practice social distancing and other coronavirus mitigation practices,” Jacobs wrote in the letter to Cuomo. Jacobs went on cite additional factors for justifying the essential designation that would enable companies and employees to get back to work right away and concluded his letter by saying “I hope that your administration will make this matter a top priority and take the necessary and appropriate action immediately.”

A primary reason the Senator believes the industry should be deemed essential is his fear over the threat of the long-term viability of many of its existing companies. Jacobs said these businesses have been placed at a severe competitive disadvantage by the Governor’s current Executive Order which allows big box retailers and national chains to sell identical products for homeowners’ use. Their plight is further complicated by the fact the their

traditionally short season is already underway. The longer they are forced to remain shut down, the greater the likelihood they could lose an entire season's worth of revenue.

James Hornung, Jr. is President of Elbers Landscape Service which has been in operation for 101 years in Western New York. He is also the Past President of the New York State Turf Grass Association, and he confirmed that many companies in his industry have been advocating for the essential designation and that time to act is running short.

"It is important to remember that this is not just about our companies. Our growers and our suppliers are being hurt as well and getting us back to work will be a good shot in the arm for both the local and statewide economies," said Hornung. "I appreciate Senator Jacobs' recognition of the competitive and economic disadvantage companies in our industry are facing and thank him for his efforts," he added.

Jacobs also said the industry already possesses the necessary personal protective equipment needed to safeguard employees given its regular use of chemicals and pesticides, and the outdoor nature of their work enables workers to stay six or more feet apart while not having to be in close proximity with their customers.

"The best way to get our economy growing again is to take advantage of every opportunity where we can safely put people back to work, and these companies are the perfect example where we can do that," said Jacobs. "The public health and safety issues can be addressed, now we must tackle the fairness issues and allow these businesses and their employees the chance to begin recovering from their losses," the Senator concluded.