Jacobs Calls On Governor to Reopen Places of Worship

SENATOR JACOBS   May 19, 2020

| ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS**, **REOPENING NEW YORK**, **PLACES OF WORSHIP**

(Buffalo, NY) – State Senator Chris Jacobs has called on the Cuomo administration to amend its New York Forward reopening plans to include places of worship for eligibility in phase one which began in Western New York yesterday.

In a letter to the Governor yesterday, Jacobs wrote that "Ours is a country founded in faith, a fact reinforced every time we recite the pledge of allegiance." Recognizing the important role people's faith played in helping them carry on through the pandemic, the letter went on to say "It is difficult to conceive that our society could embark on any return to normalcy that does not include allowing one to practice their faith in traditional settings."

The current New York Forward plan places of worship would not be allowed to welcome back congregations until the fourth and final phase which could still be at least another month away. Jacobs pointed to a series of practices that could be employed to allow places of worship to open safely and immediately. Among those were limiting occupancy, maintaining social distancing, ensuring distancing between rows, wearing of masks or appropriate face coverings, employing no touch methods of making contributions and requiring the necessary cleaning and disinfecting between services.

As New York State emerges from the worst of the COVID-19 crisis, the restoration and protection of civil liberties is a primary focus for Jacobs. In his request to the Governor he wrote "it is difficult to conceive that the rights of people to attend services should be preceded by the rights of people who want to purchase liquor, get a haircut or go to a restaurant."

"It is my sincere hope that by immediately adding places of worship as eligible businesses under phase one, people will have the opportunity to begin receiving the comfort of attending services as soon as this weekend," the Senator's letter concluded.