



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO CONTINUES PUSH FOR RELIABLE RURAL BROADBAND ACCESS

SUSAN SERINO September 3, 2020

| ISSUE: [BROADBAND COVERAGE](#), [RURAL BROADBAND SERVICE](#)



HYDE PARK, NY—Senator Sue Serino today is continuing her push to increase access to reliable rural broadband by calling on the Governor to immediately exempt high needs communities from a project-killing fiber optic tax.

The new annual tax, which was included in the 2019-20 State Budget and approved by a legislature under one-party rule, has dramatically increased costs and disincentivized

broadband development, effectively **stalling** New York's substantial progress. While Serino and her colleagues have pushed for legislation that would fully repeal the tax, with no Legislative Session days currently scheduled, Serino is calling on the Governor to take immediate action to permanently exempt high-needs rural communities who are currently stand ready to improve broadband access from the onerous tax.

Senator Sue Serino said, *“Access to high-speed broadband has never been more essential. The progress we made on expanding access across the state came to a screeching halt last year, when out of touch New York City politicians created and passed an excessive tax on fiber optic cable—a critical component of broadband development—that has left rural communities scrambling at a time when they need broadband the most. Now, more than ever, we have to do all that we can to swiftly get high-speed broadband to these underserved areas to ensure students can effectively participate in remote learning and workers can participate in a remote economy. Immediately suspending this tax in high needs areas is an important step to do that.”*

In 2018, Senator Serino was part of a coalition that rejected the implementation of this new tax in the state budget. However, language included in the 2019-2020 State Budget enacted a 'right-of-way tax' or 'use and occupancy fee,' which allowed the State Department of Transportation (DOT) to charge fees on fiber optic installation when lines are built in a state-controlled highway right-of-way. The fee is assessed per foot on the fiber optic cable and can cost as much as \$549 per foot, increasing project costs significantly.

The new tax was one of the many reasons Senator Serino voted against the budget and why she has cosponsored other bills that would fully repeal the tax including S. 8858 and S. 8934.

Serino continued, *“While I will continue pushing for a full and permanent repeal of this misguided tax, I recognize that those who approved it are unlikely to do that at this time. However, ensuring that rural communities who stand ready to improve infrastructure to help residents effectively adjust to the ‘new normal’ need immediate assistance and the Governor has the power to provide that immediate relief and spur development.”*

In June, Serino wrote to Governor Cuomo urging him to make reliable broadband access in rural communities an immediate priority ahead of the school year, and suggested utilizing unused CARES Act funding to support projects where need is the highest.

To date, no response has been received. [To view the letter, click here.](#)

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RELATED LEGISLATION

2019-S8858

- Introduced

- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate

- - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Relates to repealing provisions of the highway law and the transportation corporations law to reduce the cost of expanding broadband access; repealer

July 31, 2020

In Senate Committee [Rules](#)

Sponsored by [Pamela Helming](#)

Do you support this bill?