



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Statement from Senator Patty Ritchie

PATTY RITCHIE January 11, 2021



Today, in Governor Cuomo's State of the State address, we heard firsthand his plans for helping New York rebound in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. While the Governor and I may disagree on how we overcome the obstacles presented by COVID-19, I do share his optimism for turning the challenges we currently face into opportunities that will create a stronger, more resilient New York State.

For nearly a year now, we have suffered the devastating effects of COVID-19—an invisible enemy that has taken lives, shuttered businesses and turned our world upside down.

Putting an end to this nightmare depends on the efficient distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. As New York State continues to roll out its vaccination plan, a number of questions remain. What can be done to inoculate people more quickly? When will those with underlying conditions be able to access the vaccine? In addition, and perhaps most importantly, how does the vaccination rate correlate with the reopening of our state? These, along with many other questions, need to be answered to ensure we get our state back on track as quickly as possible.

As the Governor said today, “We simply cannot stay closed until the vaccine hits critical mass. The cost is too high.” Unfortunately, this line of thinking is too little too late for the many businesses that have been forced to close permanently as a result of onerous, inconsistent regulations handed down by New York State. Reopening and helping our small businesses rebound must be our top priorities in 2021. If we can allow nearly 7,000 people to watch the Buffalo Bills in person, certainly we can find ways to allow more businesses to safely and responsibly reopen.

Just as small businesses are struggling financially, so too is our state. And while there were issues leading up to the pandemic, the coronavirus and its side effects have laid bare the very dire situation we face. When it comes to closing the gap, we cannot balance the budget on the backs of already struggling taxpayers. Instead, we have to look for new ways to generate revenue and cut costs. These efforts also need to be our focus in the coming months.

These challenges are just the tip of the iceberg. From strengthening our health care system to ensuring that broadband is truly available to all, the list of issues we face is long. In the months to come, I am committed to working alongside my colleagues to see they are addressed and that our state emerges stronger than ever.