SENATOR SUE SERINO CALLS ON NY ATTORNEY GENERAL LETITIA JAMES AND ALBANY DISTRICT ATTORNEY TO INVESTIGATE HOCHUL ADMINISTRATION

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| ISSUE: **PAY TO PLAY**

In the wake of the disturbing allegations brought to light in a recent article by the Times Union, Senator Sue Serino today penned a letter to Attorney General Letitia James and Albany District Attorney David Soares requesting an immediate investigation into the Hochul administration to determine if they engaged in pay-to-play in violation of state ethics laws.

According to reports, Governor Hochul's Administration awarded a $637 million state contract to Digital Gadgets for COVID-19 tests, despite multiple competitors offering a much cheaper price per test. In turn, Charlies Tebele – the CEO of Digital Gadgets – hosted a large-money fundraiser for the Governor's re-election campaign which raised more than $300,000. Mr. Tebele's business partner and multiple family members also made large donations to Governor Hochul's campaign.

"What makes this situation even more concerning is the fact Governor Hochul has used her executive order powers to get around the competitive bidding process and comptroller oversight that usually accompanies these contracts and was put in place to ensure pay-to-play is not occurring. As you know, the prior Administration was entangled with multiple ethical problems, leaving New Yorkers disgusted with their government. Now is the time to ensure we build back this trust with taxpayers" Senator Serino wrote.

Senator Serino sponsors a bill (S.5326) that would ensure the Comptroller would still be able to carry appropriate and necessary oversight of state contracts even during state emergencies. Despite the clear need for such legislation, neither house in the Legislature advanced the bill.

Senate Republicans have made repeated calls for the Governor to end the state of emergency that gives her authority to skirt state procurement laws with no oversight.

A copy of the letter is attached.

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