



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

SERINO CALLS FOR COMPTROLLER AUDIT INTO COVID-19 TEST SCANDAL

SUSAN SERINO | October 18, 2022

| ISSUE: **COMPTROLLER AUDIT**



HYDE PARK, NY—Senator Sue Serino today is calling on State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli to investigate the Hochul Administration's purchasing of COVID-19 test kits from a political donor after it was revealed that New York paid a more than 80% more per test kit for the same test kits as the state of California. New York State would have saved approximately \$286 million in taxpayer funds if the State had paid the same rate as California.

The call comes just days after Senator Serino received communication from the Governor's Administration delaying the fulfillment of the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request she submitted to the Executive Chamber, the Department of Health, Empire State Development, and the Office of General Services requesting a copy of any no-bid contracts and purchases made by the state without Comptroller approval during the pandemic state of emergency.

“New Yorkers who are being taxed to the max deserve answers about how it is they ended up footing such an exorbitant bill to benefit a political donor of the Governor,” said Senator Serino. “It is clear that both the Cuomo/Hochul Administrations used the COVID-19 state of emergency to circumvent the competitive bidding process and Comptroller oversight, and now, Governor Hochul is taking a page straight out of the Cuomo playbook and using the FOIL process to block access to answers. Protecting taxpayer dollars must always be a top priority, and that is why I am urging the Comptroller to exercise his fiduciary duties over the State’s finances to investigate this deal.”

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, Charles 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.

Senator Serino recently wrote to Attorney General Letitia James and Albany County District Attorney David Soares, asking for an investigation into the matter. To date, she has not received a response from either office.

Senator Serino sponsors a bill (S.5326) that would have ensured that the Comptroller would have been able to carry out 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.

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