

From: "Senator Daphne Jordan" <jordan@nysenate.gov>

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Subject: Weekly Wrap: Working to Re-Open NY, fix the unemployment backlog, lend a helping hand, and MORE!



Dear Friend:

My latest Weekly Wrap is here covering the week ending today, Friday, May 15. In this edition, you'll read about some of my latest efforts aimed at:

- **Re-opening our Capital Region and regionally re-opening New York State**
- **Fixing our state's broken unemployment system**
- **Lending a helping hand by distributing hand sanitizer and facemasks**
- **Advocating for horse racing's summer return at Saratoga Racecourse**
- **Honoring our heroic first responders**

You find more details on these topics and much more in my latest Weekly Wrap. Please don't hesitate to call my office at (518) 371-2751 or e-mail me at jordan@nysenate.gov if I can help you or your loved ones. Continue being safe and we'll keep moving forward, together. – **Daphne Jordan, State Senator, 43rd District**

Calling for a Re-Opening of the Capital District



Today, Friday, May 15, I continued my call to re-open the Capital Region. The metrics utilized by Governor Cuomo for re-opening are faulty and resulting in our eight-county Capital Region, businesses, and communities continuing to remain closed, causing tremendous financial pain for businesses, job losses for workers, and a massive loss of sales tax revenue for local governments. A careful examination of the numbers used by the Governor clearly shows that the avoidable tragedy of nursing home deaths is holding the Capital Region back from re-opening.

Regarding hospitalizations and deaths, New York City and Long Island have far surpassed the Capital Region, yet we are still not allowed to re-open. In fact, the Capital Region 'failed' the Governor's first metric – 14-day decline in hospitalizations or under 15 new hospitalizations, 3-day average – with 18 hospitalizations, while New York City had 820, and Long Island had 425 and both "passed" this metric. Also, under the Governor's criteria, the Capital Region 'fails' the second metric – 14-day decline in hospital deaths or fewer than 5 deaths, 3-day average, with 6 deaths, while New York City has 502, and Long Island has 99 and both "passed" this metric. These huge discrepancies point to faulty metrics that have led to a faulty outcome. The longer the Capital Region remains closed, more individuals will lose their jobs and the state's unemployment backlog will only continue to grow.

I also renewed my call for the State Department of Labor to fix its broken system so hundreds of thousands of people can get the help they need. It's time to re-open the Capital Region so our employers and workers can finally get back to business.

Pushing for a Regional Re-Opening

Last Friday, I was honored to have 44 local elected leaders from across the 43rd Senate District (Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties, respectively) co-sign my letter to the Governor advocating for a safe, sensible, regional re-opening of our local communities and economy. Press release with more details is below. THANK YOU to all my colleagues who supported this important effort!

For Release: Friday, May 8, 2020

Senator Daphne Jordan, 44 local elected leaders from Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties write Governor Cuomo advocating for a safe, sensible, regional re-opening

Senator Jordan and the 44 local elected leaders cite Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington County's low rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations and mortality among reasons to not be included in the Capital Region for purposes of meeting Governor's metrics required for re-opening

Halfmoon, NY – Senator Daphne Jordan (R,C,I-Halfmoon) and 44 local elected leaders from Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties within the 43rd Senate District today sent a letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo advocating for a safe, sensible, regional re-opening of the economy and their local communities. Senator Jordan and the 44 local leaders cited Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington County's low rate of COVID-19 hospitalizations and mortality relative to downstate among the reasons to not be included in the 'Capital Region' designation for purposes of meeting metrics outlined by the Governor for communities to re-open.

The issuance of today's letter is the latest step in Senator Jordan's ongoing public advocacy in support of a safe, sensible, regional re-opening to help small businesses, local communities, and displaced workers hard hit by the financial fallout of COVID-19. On April 14, Senator Jordan successfully advocated for the re-opening of privately-owned golf courses. On April 21, Senator Jordan advocated for the re-opening of Lebanon Valley Speedway for local racers to test and tune their vehicles. On April 22, Senator Jordan advocated for a regional re-opening timeline based on CDC data. On April 24, Senator Jordan advocated for residential and commercial construction to be among the first sectors to be allowed to re-open, as she was the first state legislator to call for this necessary step that was widely hailed by the residential and commercial construction industries.

“Re-opening New York is absolutely a necessary step so our people can get back to work, small businesses can restart, and our communities can begin a long-term

process of returning to some semblance of normality and rebuilding their lost sales tax revenues. The fact of the matter is that Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties have seen, and continue seeing, far lower rates of COVID-19 hospitalizations and mortality than downstate and are largely ready to re-open.

However, by grouping these four counties with Albany County, meeting the seven metrics prescribed by the Governor will be virtually impossible as Albany County's COVID-19 hospitalization numbers were, as of May 5, equivalent to Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties all combined," Senator Jordan said.

"Holding the four counties of my 43rd Senate District to the Governor's nearly unobtainable metrics means we won't see a re-opening anytime soon.

Given their relatively low rates of COVID-19 hospitalizations and mortality, Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties, should be de-linked from the Governor's 'Capital Region' classification so they may begin moving forward with a much-needed, smart, sensible, regional re-opening as local leaders and I have been calling for. Prolonging the re-opening through unrealistic metrics will only prolong and increase the financial damage being done to our economy, small businesses, workforce, and local communities," Senator Jordan said.

In total, 44 local elected leaders – Town Supervisors, Town Council Members, County Legislators, a Mayor and Chairmen of County Boards – serving and representing Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties cosigned Senator Jordan's letter to the Governor.

Senator Jordan and the local elected leaders from Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties wrote the following letter to Governor Cuomo:

"As the State Senator serving and representing the 43rd Senate District, I am proud to join the undersigned duly elected local leaders in calling for the state's immediate reconsideration of Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties, respectively, as part of the Capital Region to satisfy required metrics to allow a much-needed safe, sensible, regional re-opening of these four counties.

Our state has been operating for nearly two months under your NY on PAUSE directive, the stated, honorable intention of which was to flatten the curve of COVID-19 related ICU hospitalizations, especially among senior citizens and immunocompromised individuals. Thankfully, we have successfully flattened the curve, as evidenced by weeks of statistics and reports showing a precipitous decline in COVID-19 hospitalizations and mortality. This is something that all New Yorkers can, and should, take great pride in. We owe a special debt of gratitude for our excellent, dedicated health care workers that have consistently and

courageously delivered compassionate, quality medical care that has saved countless lives during this crisis.

However, since the issuance of your NY on PAUSE Executive Order, job losses, looming business closures, economic devastation, and significant declines in state and local sales tax revenues have occurred, especially for upstate that had not seen nearly as many COVID-19-related deaths and hospitalizations as downstate. Considering these facts, I partnered with companies, communities, and local leaders in continually calling on you to begin the necessary process of a phased-in re-opening New York State.

During your May 4 press conference, you stated that to re-open, a region must have at least 14 days of decline in total hospitalizations and deaths. Also, you said that regions with few COVID-19 cases could not exceed 15 new total cases, or five new deaths, on a three-day rolling average.

Furthermore, you outlined several specific metrics that must be met to qualify for a re-opening including a 14-day decline in hospitalizations or under 15 new hospitalizations; a 14-day decline in hospital deaths or fewer than five deaths; new hospitalizations of two under 100,000 residents; share of total beds; share of ICU beds available; 30 per 1,000 residents tested monthly, and at least 30 contact tracers per 100,000 residents.

Our Capital Region, as defined by you, has not met the first metric. In terms of hospitalization rates, as of May 5, Columbia County has 15 (the majority of which are attributed to nursing homes), Rensselaer County has six, Saratoga County has ten, and Washington County has one, while Albany County had 32. The clear disparity in hospitalization numbers is striking. Combined, Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington County have a hospitalization rate equivalent to that of Albany County. Thus, these four counties will be impacted by Albany County and any re-opening will be prolonged with Albany County figures included as part of the Capital Region determination.

The Capital Region as presently constituted does not meet the sixth metric because the state has not made testing a priority for the 43rd Senate District, which has put the encompassing counties at a distinct disadvantage as tests have been directed downstate. However, it would be inequitable to hold our community to a high rate of testing now to re-open because there is too much catching up to do. The counties are bearing the costs of buying their own additional test kits because the state still is not giving them what they requested. Testing is important moving forward, but it's unfair to tie businesses' hands because it hasn't been the state's priority until now.

The respective counties within the 43rd Senate District – Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington – do not want to be included with Albany County in achieving the metrics. Meeting all seven metrics is certainly unattainable especially because the contact tracing you specified has not been enacted. For example, how long will it take to train and hire tracers? 30 days? 60 days? This would be too late. The metric of 30 contact tracers per 100,000 residents is, logistically speaking, a wholly impractical measurement given the need for training and administrative support for this new function that would need to be undertaken by localities, many of which have seen their local budgets decimated from the pandemic's financial fallout.

Under the seven metrics you outlined, including Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington County as part of the Capital Region will make it virtually impossible for them to successfully re-open by May 15 which is when NY on PAUSE is slated to conclude. Using your criteria outlined on May 4, as of today no region of New York State successfully qualifies for re-opening on May 15. Indeed, under your criteria, Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties currently meet only four of your seven prescribed metrics despite their having far fewer COVID-19 hospitalizations and hospital deaths than many other counties.

These four counties have largely controlled the COVID-19 outbreak, a fact for which their local leaders, public health, and emergency services personnel should be commended.

Governor, the curve has been flattened, New Yorkers have done, and continue doing, their part to stop the continued spread of COVID-19 and save lives. While we must remain vigilant, continue practicing social distancing, and take extra care to protect those most at-risk, it is time to move forward with a realistic, reachable timetable for a safe, sensible, regional re-opening – business-by-business, sector-by-sector – for our local communities of Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties, respectively. An indefinite continuation of your NY on PAUSE directive will cause further devastation to our economy, communities, and way of life here in upstate, especially in the four counties that are part of the 43rd Senate District.

Thank you for your attention to our request seeking an immediate reclassification of Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Washington Counties so they are not included as part of the Capital Region to meet your stated metrics to qualify for re-opening by May 15.”

A copy of the letter sent by Senator Jordan and the 44 local elected leaders from Columbia, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Washington Counties to Governor Cuomo can be found [here](#).

Calling on the New York State Department of Labor to Fix the State's Broken Unemployment System



Albany, NY — Members of the New York State Senate Republican Conference called on Governor Andrew Cuomo to fix his broken unemployment system and proposed a series of recommendations to remedy failures at the Department of Labor. Senate Republicans released a video with their call to the Governor and DOL, and the story of what is happening to real people because of the administration's failure.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, unemployment has skyrocketed to 1.76 million New Yorkers, and constituents, growing increasingly hopeless, have frantically called Republican state Senate offices reporting that they cannot get proper or timely assistance from DOL, or that they filed nearly two months ago and have not received a single check. Tearful callers say they cannot afford to put food on the table.

While the State has reportedly spent nearly \$88 million on high-end firm Deloitte to overhaul the DOL call system and for 200 firm employees, desperate unemployed New Yorkers still cannot get through or have legitimate filings stuck in the system.

Since DOL has been unable to fix or properly address these issues on their own, we are calling for the following immediate steps to be taken:

- The Governor must streamline application certifications and allow applicants to “certify” upon application, while still providing appropriate safeguards to help ensure that benefits only go to eligible New Yorkers;

- In addition to the 3,000 employees currently working phones, the DOL must collaborate with other state agencies to train thousands more of the state's workforce, who are staying at home, to rapidly field calls and help New Yorkers file to receive benefits immediately;
- The State Comptroller, who oversees payments, contracts, and finances in the state, should be empowered to provide Emergency Oversight and Assistance to DOL;
- Comptroller DiNapoli should conduct an immediate, fast-track audit of the DOL's procedures and administration of the program; and
- A State Legislative Joint Committee should conduct an immediate review and investigation into DOL's failed handling of unemployment benefits throughout the pandemic.

"The State Department of Labor's continued inability to correct the growing problems within New York's broken unemployment system is unacceptable and has become a national disgrace. This problem has been ongoing for weeks with still no end in sight. As our economy has crashed, unemployment has now exploded to 1.76 million New Yorkers. Unemployed workers unsure how they'll pay for food for their families don't want to hear more Albany bureaucratic doublespeak and empty promises. This problem needs to get fixed. Now. If there's time for daily press conferences then there's time to fix the system and get folks who are unemployed and hurting the help they so desperately need, deserve, and have been waiting for," said Senator Daphne Jordan.

Watch Senator Jordan and her Senate Republican colleague's video calling for reform of NY's broken unemployment system: <https://youtu.be/k73KdxPMDJQ>

Taking Part in the Senate-Assembly Joint Hearing Regarding the Federal Response to the Economic Impact of COVID-19



On Wednesday, I took part in Senate-Assembly Joint Public Hearing (via Zoom) regarding the federal response to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on small businesses in New York State. I'm pictured here speaking with Heather Briccetti, President and CEO of The Business Council of New York State, Inc., and Greg Biryła, New York State Director of the National Federation of Independent Business, during the hearing. I discussed the need for regulatory relief to help New York's small businesses cut through Albany's 22 miles of job-killing rules and red tape so they can come back stronger once we've finally re-opened New York. We need to do more than just re-open — we need to reset, reform, and revitalize our economy, and assist job creators and displaced workers to help them move past the devastating economic fallout caused by COVID-19.

Zoom Meeting with the New York State Republican Senate Conference and National Federation of Independent Business



Small businesses were the focus of Thursday morning's Zoom conference with my Senate Republican colleagues Senator Rob Ortt, Senator Pam Helming, Senator Chris Jacobs, Senator Rich Funke, and Senate staff. We had an in-depth discussion with Greg Biryla, National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) NY State Director, and Ashley Ranslow, NFIB Assistant NY State Director, about how we can help our small businesses who are struggling and trying to re-open. Our conversation included critical topics such as re-opening New York, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, farming, taxes, liability protection and more.

Lending a Helping Hand with Cornell Cooperative's Hand Sanitizer Distribution







It was great lending a helping hand to our community yesterday as I took part in Cornell Cooperative Extension's hand sanitizer and mask distribution, with

Assemblywoman Mary Beth Walsh, and Susan Beebe, Association Issue Leader/Assistant Director for Cornell Cooperative Extension. I am pictured above with Byron Winney, Owner of Winney's Blueberry Farm in Schuylerville. He was one of the farmers who came to pick up hand sanitizer and masks for his farmworkers, and the many people who come to pick their own blueberries. My thanks again to Cornell Cooperative Extension and Winney's Farm for their generosity and concern for the community!

Advocating for Horse Racing's Return to Saratoga County this Summer



I recently partnered with Assemblywoman Carrie Woerner in writing to the Governor in advocating for horse racing's return to Saratoga County this summer. The following link is to the Daily Gazette's Stephen Williams article on my efforts in support of horse racing happening at Saratoga Race Course this summer to support Saratoga Springs, Saratoga County, and our Capital Region economy:
<https://dailygazette.com/article/2020/05/13/saratoga-county-may-back-racing-without-fans-amid-covid-19>

Recognizing National Police Week



This week marked “National Police Week,” a perfect opportunity to recognize and salute the brave men and women of our police departments who put their lives on the line for us every day. Whether it's during a normal day or at the height of a global pandemic, our law enforcement officers deserve the utmost respect and praise.

On behalf of all our communities, I offer a heartfelt thanks to our law enforcement professionals and acknowledge these true heroes who risk their lives to keep us safe. Thank you all!

LC-130 Flyover Honoring our First Responders



Hillcrest Firefighter and EMT George McBride sent me some incredible photos (above) of this week's LC-130 "Skybird" flyover to honor our courageous frontline

health care workers, medical staff, and first responders who've been serving around the clock during the COVID-19 outbreak. George was the driving force behind this event that saw five Mutual Aid Departments from Hillcrest, Mechanicville, Halfmoon, Clifton Park, and Arvin Hart gathered on McBride's Field in Halfmoon with the stars and stripes on proud, full display in honor of the event. Thank you for sharing these wonderful pictures George! Photo credit: Mark Morand at Mainframe Photography.

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