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January 25, 2018

Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Office of the Governor  
Executive Chamber  
Second Floor  
Albany, New York 12224

**Re: \$65M Budget Proposal to Target Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)**

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As you stated in your 2018-2019 budget presentation, filtration systems for drinking water can cost billions of dollars. This is why we are supportive of the \$65 million budget initiative to combat harmful algal blooms (HABs) in Upstate New York that threaten drinking water sources, upstate tourism in the Finger Lakes Region, and recreational use of lakes.

However, your budget proposal falls short of fully supporting Upstate lakes and tourism as the twelve priority lakes listed in your proposal that are considered vulnerable to HABs is incomplete. You state that the reason these twelve lakes were chosen is due to their importance as critical sources of drinking water and their vitality to tourism in Upstate NY. Yet Seneca, Canandaigua, and Keuka Lakes are pivotal tourism centers, are largely used for drinking water, and have been left out of the priority lakes list eligible for funding.

The occurrence of HABs has been linked to phosphorus and nutrient inputs. As you are aware, there is significant agriculture activity around Seneca, Canandaigua, and Keuka Lakes, which coupled with heavy rain events over the last several years has exacerbated the production of HABs and threatens all of the Finger Lakes Region. Seneca, Canandaigua, and Keuka Lakes were all reported to have HABs present during the summer of 2017, Keuka Lake for the first time.

Some HABs can prove to be harmful, and even toxic. Canandaigua Lake is considered a highly valued water resource due to its drinking water supply to over 70,000 residents, and is considered a threatened water source by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). It is imperative that NYS protects Canandaigua Lake for its resource value and to also support both its cold and warm water fisheries.

The first time that Seneca Lake had three laboratory-confirmed, blue-green algae blooms reported was in 2015. These blooms were determined to be at levels that were above the DEC threshold-criteria of concern. Fifteen of the seventeen reports of suspicious algae that year were determined to be blue-green algae (BGA), which can form blooms under the right conditions and possibly become toxic.

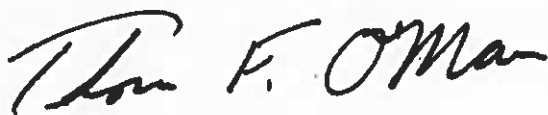
Reports on Seneca and Keuka Lakes are increasing; partly because people know what to look for due to DEC information and outreach. BGAs can discolor the water or produce floating scum on the water's surface. These can cause health risks to people and animals when they are exposed to them by consuming surface water, or swimming in the contaminated water.

Seneca, Canandaigua, and Keuka Lakes are the epicenter of NYS Wine Country and Finger Lakes Tourism. The presence of HABs, or BGAs that have not been classified, will discourage lake use with regard to touring, fishing, swimming and other recreational uses. BGA are of specific concern because of their potential impacts on drinking and recreational waters.

It is imperative that our localities are equipped with support to combat algal blooms and there is awareness amongst residents and tourists of how to respond to these threats in the water if they should come upon them. The presence of HABs in our lakes will only increase if we are not proactive.

As such, we respectfully request that you amend your proposal to include Seneca, Canandaigua and Keuka Lakes on the priority list for funding in your \$65 million 4-point initiative to aggressively combat harmful algal blooms to target HABs. Anything less would be a disservice to the residents of the region and the valuable contributions the lakes play to the growing tourism and economic vitality of our area.

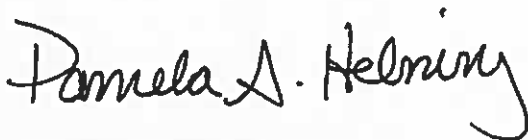
Sincerely,



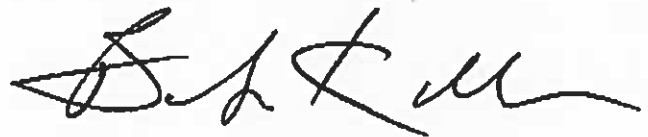
Senator Thomas F. O'Mara  
58<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Assemblyman Philip A. Palmesano  
132<sup>nd</sup> Assembly District



Senator Pamela A. Helming  
54<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb  
131<sup>st</sup> Assembly District

cc: Venetia Lannon, Deputy Secretary to the Governor for the Environment  
Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan  
Allison Bradley, Senate Finance Committee

**Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie**

**Assem. Helene E. Weinstein, Chair, Assembly Committee on Ways and Means**

**Assem. Bob Oaks, Ranker, Assembly Committee on Ways and Means**

**Assem. Steve Engelbright, Chair, Assembly Committee on Environmental Conservation**

**Assem. Dan Stec, Ranker, Assembly Committee on Environmental Conservation**