

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE

48TH DISTRICT

OSWEGO, JEFFERSON, ST. LAWRENCE COUNTIES

SECRETARY OF THE SENATE MINORITY

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
ENERGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS
LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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MILITARY AFFAIRS
WOMEN'S ISSUES
MEMBER
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON RURAL
RESOURCES

April 17, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor
Executive Chamber
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12225

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Thank you for your leadership during these unprecedented times.

We understand that at the onset of this pandemic, strict precautions needed to be taken in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19. To date, the people of Central and Northern New York have been diligent about staying home, practicing social distancing and following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for protecting their health. As a result, in the region we represent—which includes Jefferson, Lewis, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties and has a total population of just over 361,000 people—has had just over 200 cases of COVID-19. Only a handful of those with confirmed cases are hospitalized at this time.

As the curve continues to flatten and our state looks toward reopening, we believe it is critical that we move forward with a regional approach that reflects the differences in population density and COVID-19 infection rates. In recent days, our offices have been inundated with concerns from those we represent about the devastating impact this pandemic is having on the economic vitality of our region. Many have expressed frustration and confusion over why our region—with just over 200 confirmed cases—would be subject to the same restrictions as New York City, which as of today has had more than 123,000 cases of COVID-19. For example:

- Many small businesses, which have been forced to close their doors, have expressed that they may not be able to recover if they are not permitted to reopen in the near future;
- Area hospitals, which are postponing elective surgeries, have been forced to lay off hundreds of workers;
- Seasonal businesses, which normally would be prepping for the beginning of their busiest time of year, are filled with stress, worry and anxiety over the uncertainty of whether or not they will be able to operate in 2020;

REPLY TO: ALBANY OFFICE: ROOM 302, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247 (518) 455-3438
 JEFFERSON COUNTY OFFICE: 317 WASHINGTON STREET, ROOM 418, WATERTOWN, NEW YORK 13601 (315) 782-3418
 OSWEGO COUNTY OFFICE: 46 EAST BRIDGE STREET, FIRST FLOOR, OSWEGO, NEW YORK 13126 (315) 342-2057
 ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY OFFICE: 330 FORD STREET, OGDENSBURG, NEW YORK 13669 (315) 393-3024

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- Many marinas that line the shores of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario are still not permitted to open—despite the fact that the services they offer provide people with a way to get outdoors either individually or as a family, and at the same time continue to practice social distancing; and
- Many workers impacted by the closure of the aforementioned businesses are still struggling to file for unemployment. While we are appreciative of efforts made to streamline this process, many of these individuals still have yet to successfully file, are suffering and looking to get back to work as soon as possible.

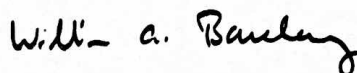
Upstate New York's economy is already fragile and we fear that continuing to hold this region to the same standards as New York City when it comes to reopening will only create further hardship for the hardworking people of our region. We respectfully request that you take into consideration the significant differences between Upstate New York and New York City as you work to reopen New York State in a way that is both safe and responsible.

Again, thank you for the consideration of our request. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



Patty Ritchie
State Senator



William Barclay
Assembly Minority Leader



Ken Blankenbush
Member of Assembly



Mark Walczyk
Member of Assembly

Scott Gray
Jefferson County Board of Legislators Chair

James Weatherup
Oswego County Board of Legislators Chair

Joseph Lightfoot
St. Lawrence County Board of Legislators Chair