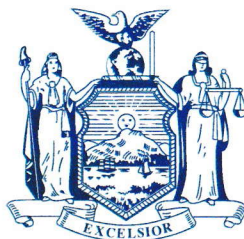


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**CHRISTOPHER L. JACOBS**  
SENATOR, 60<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

May 19, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor  
State of New York  
New York State Capitol Building  
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As Western New York and neighboring upstate regions begin the reopening process, I am writing to request that your administration include places of worship for eligibility in phase one.

Ours is a country founded in faith, a fact reinforced every time we recite the pledge of allegiance. During this once in a life-time global pandemic, that faith has been tested on many occasions, and that faith has supported our citizens and enabled them to carry on. It is difficult to conceive that our society could embark on any return to normalcy that does not include allowing one to practice their faith in traditional settings.

Your administration can look to our neighbors in Massachusetts as an example of how we could allow people to return to their places of worship while protecting public health and safety. Limiting occupancy, maintaining social distancing, ensuring distancing between rows, wearing of masks or appropriate face coverings, employing no touch methods of contributions and requiring the necessary cleaning and disinfecting between services are all practices that could be instituted so services could resume safely and immediately.

While government has a legitimate legal argument for protecting public safety, I would also suggest that every business we allow to open while refusing to include churches strengthens any potential legal claims that First Amendment freedoms of religion and assembly are being violated. Given our history as "one nation under God", it is difficult to conceive that the rights of people to attend services should be preceded by the rights of people who want to purchase liquor, get a haircut or go to a restaurant.




**Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo**  
**May 19, 2020**  
**Page 2.**

It is my sincere hope that by immediately adding places of worship as eligible businesses under phase one, people will have the opportunity to begin receiving the comfort of attending services as soon as this weekend.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Jacobs".

Senator Chris Jacobs  
60<sup>th</sup> District