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ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE
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NEW YORK STATE SENATE



**SENATOR
FREDERICK J. AKSHAR II
52ND SENATE DISTRICT**

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May 8, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
New York State Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As we've collectively navigated the coronavirus pandemic and worked together to save lives, thousands of our mutual constituents are suffering and hundreds of businesses are gasping for air.

Our way of life has been completely undermined, but we in the Southern Tier are ready to get back to work. That's what we do as Americans and our already economically-disadvantaged area desperately needs a lift. I've been approached by countless businesses who have plans in place to safely re-open within local, state and federal health guidelines.

We all accept the dangerous nature of this virus but I simply can't stand by in good conscience knowing that self-employed single moms are jobless, seniors have lost part-time work, millennials can't make ends meet and entire families have been left without income.

I was contacted by a young woman who was laid off from her job due to government mandate and has \$11.00 left in her bank account after failing to get through to the NYS Department of Labor for her unemployment claim. That's disgraceful!

I was also contacted by a local business owner who can't pay their property taxes and rent payments after losing 100% of their revenue. These stories of real struggle go on and on, but there's a time to listen and there's a time to act. Now is the time to act.

Enough is enough, Governor. The Southern Tier is suffering and it is our sworn duty to provide them relief.

Making calculative decisions in response to coronavirus is without a doubt complex, and there are many guiding factors that should be weighed when considering the re-opening of our economy. You often reference facts in your well-produced press conferences.

Here are the facts:

- Your guidelines require a new hospitalization rate under 2, ours is 0.11.
- Your guidelines require at least a 30% hospital bed availability, ours is nearly double that.
- Your guidelines require a 30% ICU bed availability, ours is 52%.
- Your guidelines require a decline in both deaths and hospitalizations over a 14-day period. We've met both.

But to gain a more accurate perspective, you must also listen to the facts at the ground level, where countless individuals still haven't received their unemployment insurance/ pandemic unemployment assistance and some businesses are near bankruptcy. These are real issues impacting New Yorkers and we should also let these important facts help guide our decision-making.

Thankfully, our Southern Tier communities have been spared the level of tragedy seen in downstate regions of the state. By taking the appropriate precautions and safely following the CDC's social distancing guidelines, the people of the Southern Tier have been able to protect our communities from the horrors this virus has inflicted upon New York City and the surrounding areas.

Our businesses, our local municipalities and our people shouldn't be punished for doing the right thing with arbitrary reopening delays and carefully placed goal posts located just beyond our reach.

While I believe the New York Forward Re-Opening Advisory Committee is well-intentioned, it's comprised of mostly downstate and Long Island members who don't have a clue about our Upstate way of life. There's no time for the industries and businesses relegated to later phases to wait.

I'd urge you to cut through this unnecessary bureaucracy and allow all businesses to re-open by May 15th if they have implemented the necessary and appropriate plans to provide safe accommodations for their employees and customers focused on social distancing and readily available PPE.

It's the only way Southern Tier residents will be able to pull their lives back together and begin to enjoy the prosperity that our small communities have to offer once again.

All the best,



Frederick J. Akshar II
52nd Senate District

CC: Stacey Duncan, New York Forward Re-Opening Advisory Board Member