



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

January 5, 2023

Honorable Tim Kennedy
Transportation Committee Chair
Legislative Office Building
Room 708
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable James Skoufis
Investigations & Government Operations Chair
Legislative Office Building
Room 815
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Jessica Scarcella-Spanton
Veterans, Homeland Security & Military Affairs Chair
Legislative Office Building
Room 315
Albany, NY 12247

Re: Legislative Hearing on Buffalo Blizzard Response

Dear Committee Chairs:

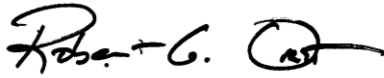
As you know, in December of 2022, the greater Buffalo-Niagara community was hit by a historic blizzard that simultaneously brought over four feet of lake-effect snow, severe wind and arctic cold to the region. Despite advance notice regarding the storm's predicted severity, parts of the region that so often sets the standard for effective storm response and snow removal seemed to be underprepared. **In this regard, in your capacities as the chairs of the Senate Committees on Investigations and Government Operations, Transportation and Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs, we write to urge you to exercise your authority to immediately conduct an oversight hearing to identify any shortcomings in the state's response, inform potential legislative solutions and help develop effective future response requirements.**

With 42 reported fatalities at the time of this letter, it is clear that this winter storm has exposed major shortcomings in response and recovery that require not only a prompt after-action review to improve future storm response efforts, but a comprehensive legislative review of the total operation. The storm hit the region with a vast majority of the total snow falling within the first 30 to 36 hours. However, too many residents were still grappling with the crippling consequences more than a week later, with the City of Buffalo and surrounding areas being particularly slow to reopen, and over 1,000 calls to the City's emergency system going unanswered.

While we recognize the historic nature of the storm, and appreciate the hard work and efforts put forward by first responders, local officials, public works employees, and good samaritans, it is clear that we must learn the tough lessons gleaned from this event. A legislative hearing is a responsible way to understand the successes and shortcomings of the state and local effort, and ensure we are prepared to adequately respond to any future events in the Western New York region or across the state.

We thank you for your consideration of this request and urge a swift response. It is our hope that we can work together in a bipartisan manner on behalf of residents who have been impacted by this tragic event.

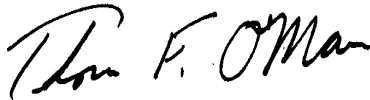
Sincerely,



Senator Rob Ort
Minority Leader
62nd State Senate District



Senator Patrick Gallivan
59th State Senate District



Senator Tom O'Mara
Ranker, Investigations & Government Operations



Senator Peter Oberacker
Ranker, Transportation



Senator Jacob C. Ashby
Ranker, Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs