



PHILIP A. PALMESANO
Chemung, Schuyler, Seneca,
Steuben, and Yates Counties
Assemblyman 132nd District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

ASSISTANT MINORITY LEADER

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
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Corrections
Insurance
Ways and Means

Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

June 4, 2020

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

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Our state's successful recovery from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic depends on how quickly we transition from a state of near total lockdown to a fully functioning and vibrant economy. One sector that has been deemed necessary from day one, construction related to essential infrastructure, is key to this success. However, \$743 million in local infrastructure construction and maintenance projects are on hold due to inaction by the state.

We appreciate your recent statements about the importance of infrastructure investment as a critical and effective way to help restart and stimulate our economy and get people back to work. At your briefing you said: "There is no better time to build than right now. You need to start the economy, you need to create jobs, and you need to renew and repair this country's economy and infrastructure. Now is the time to do it." We could not agree more.

And while your remarks thus far have focused on larger, regionally significant downstate tunnels and mass transit needs, we are confident that you fully recognize the importance of local transportation infrastructure projects to the vitality of so many upstate, rural economies, and to the statewide transportation system as a whole.

Our Assembly Minority Conference and other legislative colleagues worked together with you this year to enact a fully committed and dedicated plan to invest in the local transportation infrastructure network through vital programs like CHIPS, PAVE-NY, BRIDGE-NY, and Extreme Winter Recovery. However, the ability to sustain the level of vital local highway and bridge projects necessary for a safe and functioning system and economic recovery is in doubt, as the state has not yet officially announced funding availability.

We are urging you now to provide the official funding distribution runs and authorizations for these local transportation programs that are necessary for many municipalities to move forward with critical road, bridge, and culvert work.

As the lockdowns are finally eased and the reopening begins, our counties, towns, cities, and villages find themselves frustrated. Many counties have lost nearly 25% of their sales tax revenues and all municipalities are financially constrained by the economic downturn. Not having a clear commitment from the state that expenditures for local road and bridge projects will be fully reimbursed has put the brakes on projects, resulting in cuts to highway department crews and personnel. Some departments are at 50% staffing, some less. There are localities that have justifiably halted public road maintenance and rehabilitation altogether due to the uncertainty of state reimbursement. And we are told that some federal aid projects are in jeopardy due to the inability of counties to secure the required local funding match.

The continued viability of local consulting and engineering firms, equipment dealers, materials suppliers, and other businesses, many that are minority and women owned firms, are dependent in large measure on payments for municipal work through these state aided transportation programs. Without this work, these local and vital partners in the construction supply chain will be strained, many to the financial breaking point. And we know that behind all these entities are individuals and families struggling to get by. Green-lighting this funding will help these businesses that make up the highway construction industry to play a significant role in the economic recovery of our communities and the state as a whole.

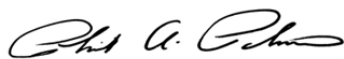
We see the crews active on the state's highways, bridges, and Thruway system. We know you have noted the reduction in traffic volume as a prime time to do this work while improving the safety of the state workers and contractors in and around these job sites. We are urging you to have the same consideration for our local crews and upstate and rural communities.

It is now the beginning of June; we've lost at least two months of the construction season, a window that is already short due to the Northeast climate and weather events. The funding is in place; highway departments need to ramp up to 100 percent. We need to jumpstart the local economies before some upstate communities pass the point of viability.

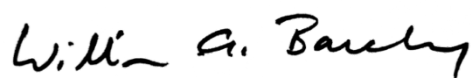
Please direct the Department of Transportation to release the local transportation allocations, issue the CHIPS authorization letters to municipalities, and commit to full reimbursements under these programs without further delay.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

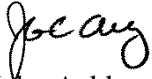
Sincerely,



Phil Palmesano
132nd Assembly District



Will Barclay
Assembly Minority Leader



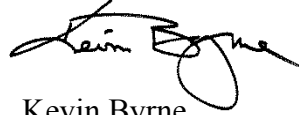
Jake Ashby
107th Assembly District



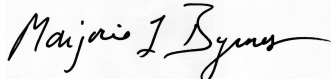
Ken Blankenbush
117th Assembly District



Karl Brabenec
98th Assembly District



Kevin Byrne
94th Assembly District



Marjorie Bynes
133rd Assembly District



Clifford W. Crouch
122nd Assembly District



Joe DeStefano
3rd Assembly District



David DiPietro
147th Assembly District



Gary D. Finch
126th Assembly District



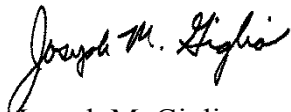
Michael Fitzpatrick
8th Assembly District



Christopher S. Friend
124th Assembly District



Andrew Garbarino
7th Assembly District



Joseph M. Giglio
148th Assembly District



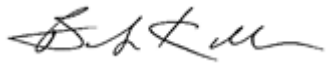
Andy Goodell
150th Assembly District



Steve Hawley
139th Assembly District



Mark Johns
135th Assembly District



Brian M. Kolb
131st Assembly District



Peter Lawrence
134th Assembly District



Nicole Malliotakis
64th Assembly District



Brian Manktelow
130th Assembly District



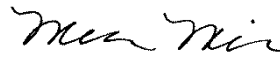
Dave McDonough
14th Assembly District



John Mikulin
17th Assembly District



Brian Miller
101st Assembly District



Melissa "Missy" Miller
20th Assembly District



Michael Montesano
15th Assembly District



Angelo Morinello
145th Assembly District



Mike Norris
144th Assembly District



Anthony Palumbo
2nd Assembly District



Ed Ra
19th Assembly District



Mike Reilly
62nd Assembly District



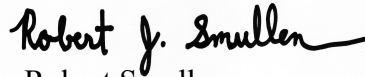
John Salka
121st Assembly District



Colin Schmitt
99th Assembly District



Doug Smith
5th Assembly District



Robert Smullen
118th Assembly District



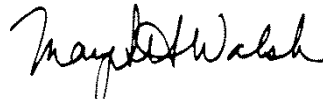
Daniel Stec
114th Assembly District



Chris Tague
102nd Assembly District



Mark Walczyk
116th Assembly District



Mary Beth Walsh
112th Assembly District

cc: Robert Mujica, Director, Division of Budget
Marie Therese Dominguez, Commissioner, Department of Transportation