



MONICA WALLACE  
Assemblymember 143<sup>rd</sup> District  
Erie County

THE ASSEMBLY  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY

CHAIR  
Subcommittee on  
Volunteer Emergency Services  
COMMITTEES  
Aging  
Energy  
Judiciary  
Local Governments  
Veterans' Affairs

April 16, 2020

Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

**Re: Housing for COVID heroes**

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I am writing to request that you grant the University at Buffalo the authority to offer unused student housing to our COVID heroes. Most of the student housing is currently unoccupied, and I believe it provides an ideal option for healthcare workers seeking to avoid infecting their loved ones after returning from a shift. I have been in contact with administration officials at the University, and they expressed a willingness to assist provided that doing so doesn't disrupt the State's existing plans for that space in the event of a spike in COVID patients.

As you have acknowledged on many occasions, our healthcare workers are on the front lines in this war, putting themselves at risk for our community every single day. Many of the nurses and doctors on the front line have expressed concerns, not only for their own safety, but also for the safety of their family members whom they fear they may inadvertently infect. This concern is especially grave for healthcare workers who have loved ones at home who are at greater risk of developing complications from the infection due to age or preexisting conditions. To avoid the possibility of spreading the infection to their loved ones, some of these COVID heroes have opted to find alternative housing. Although some of the local hospitals have offered to pay for hotel rooms for staff, not all have done so. Some have instead directed staff to local hotels offering discounted rates at the healthcare worker's own expense. I do not fault the cash-strapped hospitals for being unable to afford hotel rooms for their staff. However, I believe there are other options that do not require healthcare workers to foot the bill or sleep in a friend's RV (as some are doing) to keep their families safe.

University at Buffalo housing provides one such option. Many of the rooms are currently unoccupied and would provide an ideal respite for COVID healthcare heroes seeking to avoid the possibility of infecting loved ones. Indeed, many of these housing options include "suites" or apartment-style housing that would provide healthcare workers with private bathrooms. I'm confident that a plan can be developed to make a limited number of rooms available to those healthcare workers who are sacrificing everything for the rest of us. I also note that universities across the country have stepped up to offer this option to the COVID heroes in their communities.

Based upon my conversations with healthcare workers, I believe there is great interest in having this option available. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. I look forward to your response.

Finally, on behalf of the members of my community, I'd like to thank you for your leadership during this difficult time. Your daily briefings have been extraordinarily informative to the public, and the accessibility of your staff has been incredible. I appreciate your willingness to work in partnership with elected officials from across the state at all levels of government to address this unprecedented crisis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monica Wallace". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Monica P. Wallace  
Assemblymember, District 143

cc: Kristina Johnson, SUNY Chancellor  
Satish Tripathi, University at Buffalo President