



SENATOR RACHEL MAY
CHAIR

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CHAIR

STATE OF NEW YORK
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON RURAL RESOURCES

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader, United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schumer,

We write to you today to express our concerns regarding the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on rural communities and to express our support for the next federal economic stimulus bill to include funding based on the Rebuild Rural America Act.

Rural New York is home to approximately 17 percent of New Yorkers, or 3.3 million people. New York is a leading agricultural state in a range of commodities, including dairy, apples, maple syrup, and wine. Rural areas provide natural resources that much of the country depends on for food, energy, water, and recreation. Yet, despite the essential role they serve, rural areas are notoriously forgotten and critically underfunded.

Even before the current pandemic, rural communities were struggling to fund and operate aging health care and transportation systems. Broadband service is inefficient or nonexistent, which puts rural residents at a disadvantage in accessing information, obtaining health and legal services, advancing education, and even working. Despite the inequities they face, rural communities provide not only the nation, but the world with a safe and affordable food supply.

Due to the disastrous impact of COVID-19, rural communities struggle now more than ever to survive. New York State's projected \$15 billion revenue shortfall, together with lost tax revenue in county and local budgets, will force job losses and cuts to important rural programs, at a time when costs for health care, emergency services, and managing supply chains have never been higher. Only the federal government has the resources to immediately keep states and localities solvent.

We urge Congress to include robust funding for states and localities in its next COVID-19 economic relief package with a focus on rural communities. We applaud Senator Gillibrand and Congressman Delgado for requesting \$50 billion based on the Rebuild Rural America Act introduced in October 2019. Administered through flexible block grants, this funding would allow small towns, counties, and rural communities to rebuild their economies and to continue to battle COVID-19. We also endorse the idea that the United States Department of Agriculture should form a rural task force to prioritize the needs of rural communities.

Sincerely,



Rachel May
Senator, 53rd District
Chair, Legislative Commission on Rural Resources
Chair, Committee on Aging



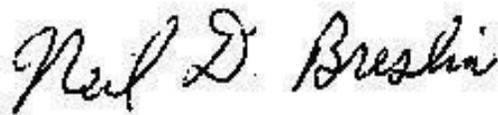
Angelo Santabarbara
Assemblyman, 111th District
Co-Chair, Legislative Commission on Rural Resources
Chair, Subcommittee on Autism Spectrum Disorders



Jen Metzger
Senator, 42nd District
Chair, Committee on Agriculture



Carrie Woerner
Assemblywoman, 113th District
Chair, Subcommittee on Agricultural Production and Technology



Neil Breslin
Senator, 44th District
Chair, Committee on Insurance



Donna Lupardo
Assemblywoman, 123rd District
Chair, Committee on Agriculture

cc:

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand, United States Senate
The Honorable Antonio Delgado, United States House of Representatives
Secretary Sonny Perdue, United States Department of Agriculture
Commissioner Richard Ball, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
Stephen Acquario, Executive Director, New York State Association of Counties
Peter Baynes, Executive Director, New York State Conference of Mayors
David Fisher, President, New York Farm Bureau