

THE ASSEMBLY STATE OF NEW YORK ALBANY

April 10, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump President of the United States The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Sonny Perdue Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Jovita Carranza Administrator of the U.S. Small Business Administration 409 3rd Street, SW Washington, DC 20416

The Honorable Charles Schumer Senate Minority Leader Hart Senate Office Building, 322 Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. President, Secretary Perdue, Administrator Carranza, Minority Leader Schumer & Congressional Leaders:

As federal officials attempt to manage and minimize the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we write to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to take immediate steps to provide critical relief to New York State's Agricultural industry.

Members of the New York State Assembly Minority Conference represent thousands of family farms in every region of the State. We write to our federal representatives because we know firsthand the needs of our farmers, and we are witnessing an industry approaching the brink of collapse.

With approximately 160,000 positive cases, New York State has been the epicenter of the COVID-19 outbreak for months. Measures to prevent the spread of the virus have led to severe

disruptions to the dairy industry's supply chain, dramatic reductions in demand, and have forced many farmers to dump valuable product.

New York's 33,400 farms, including 4,000 dairy farms, are the backbone of our economy, and more importantly, the food supply. In New York alone, the agricultural industry generates more than \$5 billion in sales annually, of which \$2.5 billion is attributable to the dairy industry.

As one of America's top dairy-producing states, New York's economy and entire agricultural industry are facing an unprecedented challenge that necessitates an unprecedented commitment from federal leaders. While officials in Washington deliberate additional stimulus measures to revitalize our nation, help our citizens, and enable industries to recover, we respectfully request that you consider these recommendations to help our farms and State economy survive:

- The \$2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was a monumental achievement to assist Americans in this time of crisis. We believe the USDA must ensure New York State immediately receives the largest percentage of CARES Act funding, due to the severity of the virus here, combined with our position as a national leader in dairy production;
- The Small Business Administration (SBA) must clarify and ensure that farm and agricultural businesses are eligible for the \$10,000 Economic Injury Disaster Loan provided for in the CARES Act;
- Further, the federal government must ensure that the temporary flexibilities on farm loans recently announced by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) are made permanent for the duration of the pandemic and subsequent economic recovery, and also by ensuring adequate and equitable access to credit during this period of market uncertainty;
- Washington must enact an additional stimulus package that provides 100 percent federal reimbursement of monies lost to New York farmers that would not be covered under the CARES Act. Further, this relief should continue for at least 90 days after the present emergency period has expired;
- The federal government should ensure that the H2-A visa program continues to operate;
- The list of agricultural items should be expanded to include dairy products for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program; and
- The federal government should reimburse the State for any revenues lost by actions designed to reduce costs and regulatory burdens on the agricultural industry.

Farming is part of the very fabric of our state and nation. It is more than just an industry or occupation. Farming is a calling that requires unique character, an unrivaled work ethic, and an unwavering commitment to provide food and products upon which the entire world relies. We need to do everything in our power to ensure their success and their survival continues long after we have defeated the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you know, time is of the essence. Every day that passes without meaningful federal assistance is another day of uncertainty for farming families, or another day farms move closer to closing their doors. We hope the USDA will act with speed and urgency to provide substantial relief here in New York.

Our entire Conference appreciates your tireless efforts during this troubling time. We thank you for your consideration and attention to this pressing matter.

God bless America.

Sincerely,

Will- a. Baulay

Will Barclay Assembly Minority Leader

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Ken Blanfenbus

Jake Ashby 107th Assembly District

Kevin Byrne 94th Assembly District

Clifford W. Crouch 122nd Assembly District

David DiPietro 147th Assembly District

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102nd Assembly District

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Robert Smullen
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Mark Walczyk 116th Assembly District cc: Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand, Senator

Honorable Lee Zeldin, Congressman

Honorable Pete King, Congressman

Honorable Thomas Suozzi, Congressman

Honorable Kathleen Rice, Congresswoman

Honorable Gregory Meeks, Congressman

Honorable Grace Meng, Congresswoman

Honorable Nydia Velazquez, Congresswoman

Honorable Hakeem Jeffries, Congressman

Honorable Yvette Clarke, Congresswoman

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Honorable Max Rose, Congressman

Honorable Carolyn Mahoney, Congresswoman

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Honorable Joseph Morelle, Congressman

Honorable Brian Higgins, Congressman