



WILL BARCLAY
Minority Leader

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

April 15, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor, State of New York
Executive Chamber, State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

The Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker, New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, New York 12248

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader, New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, New York 12247

The Honorable John Flanagan
Minority Leader, New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 909
Albany, New York 12247

Mr. Richard Ball
Commissioner, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, New York 12235

Dear Governor Cuomo, Legislative Leaders & Commissioner Ball:

As New York's elected leaders, our responsibilities to constituents have never been more important. Your efforts to provide leadership and stability during the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis are genuinely appreciated.

With more than 180,000 cases of the virus, no state has felt the social, economic, and public health effects of the virus like New York. As we identify ways to manage and minimize the devastating impacts of the virus, we must consider immediate steps to provide critical relief to New York State's agricultural industry.

New York State is home to 33,400 farms, including 4,000 dairy farms – they are a pillar of our economy, just as they have been for generations. But more importantly, our farms are the driving force of our food supply. As one of America’s top dairy-producing states, New York’s entire agricultural industry is trying to navigate through unimaginable hardships that necessitate a historic commitment from State leaders.

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. The Assembly Minority Conference has compiled a list of recommendations to help our farms survive and stabilize State and local economies. Farmers need immediate help. I hope that we can work collaboratively, along with the appropriate State agencies, to implement these changes and get New York’s agricultural community back on track. Our recommendations include:

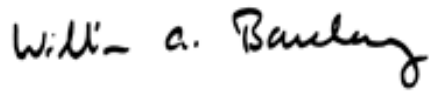
- Suspend, for 1 year, DMV registration requirements for agricultural vehicles and farm trucks;
- Suspend the highway use tax, special hauling permit fees, and collection of New York State tolls for vehicles used to transport agricultural products, including milk;
- Suspend, for 1 year, the 60-hour overtime threshold for farm laborers enacted as part of the 2019 Farm Labor bill;
- Suspend, during the state of emergency period, the 24-hour agricultural rest requirement;
- Extend the Milk Producers Security Fund to help producers who are unable to sell because of COVID-19;
- Use additional federal stimulus money for direct cash infusions for Cornell Cooperative Extensions to assist in the provision of emergency services;
- Use federal stimulus funding to invest in rural broadband infrastructure to assist in the provision of services to farms/rural areas during uncertain social and economic times;
- Provide vouchers for food banks to purchase local dairy and agricultural products; and
- Stipulate “green nurseries” as essential businesses for the remainder of the COVID-19 crisis, so that these businesses can re-open while following social-distancing guidelines.

Since the birth of our nation, farming has been part of the very fabric of our history. Farming represents much more than just an industry or occupation – it 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. The survival of our agriculture industry is essential to our collective recovery and our future well-being long after we have defeated the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you know, time is of the essence. Every day that passes without meaningful action is another day of uncertainty for farming families, or another day farms move closer to closing their doors. We hope the State can act with speed, urgency, and collaboration to provide substantial relief to New York’s farmers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Will Barclay
Assembly Minority Leader



Ken Blankenbush
117th Assembly District



Jake Ashby
107th Assembly District



Kevin Byrne
94th Assembly District



Clifford W. Crouch
122nd Assembly District



David DiPietro
147th Assembly District



Michael Fitzpatrick
8th Assembly District



Chris Tague
102nd Assembly District



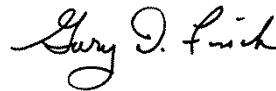
Karl Brabenec
98th Assembly District



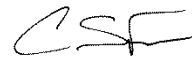
Marjorie Byrnes
133rd Assembly



Joe DeStefano
3rd Assembly District



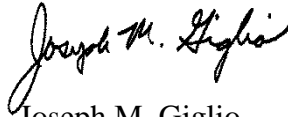
Gary D. Finch
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Christopher S. Friend
124th Assembly District



Andrew Garbarino
7th Assembly District



Joseph M. Giglio
148th Assembly District



Andy Goodell
150th Assembly District




Steve Hawley
139th Assembly District



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Brian M. Kolb
131st Assembly District



Kieran Michael Lalor
105th Assembly District



Peter Lawrence
134th Assembly District



Mike LiPetri
9th Assembly District



Nicole Malliotakis
64th Assembly District



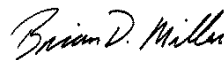
Brian Manktelow
130th Assembly District



Dave McDonough
14th Assembly District



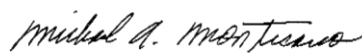
John Mikulin
17th Assembly District



Brian Miller
101st Assembly District



Melissa "Missy" Miller
20th Assembly District



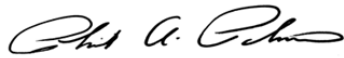
Michael Montesano
15th Assembly District



Angelo Morinello
145th Assembly District



Mike Norris
144th Assembly District



Phil Palmesano
132nd Assembly District



Anthony Palumbo
2nd Assembly District



Ed Ra
19th Assembly District



Mike Reilly
62nd Assembly District



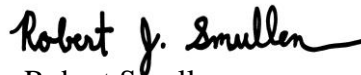
John Salka
121st Assembly District



Colin Schmitt
99th Assembly District



Doug Smith
5th Assembly District



Robert Smullen
118th Assembly District



Daniel Stec
114th Assembly District



Mark Walczyk
116th Assembly District



Mary Beth Walsh
112th Assembly District