

# CITY OF ALBANY



NEW YORK

ALBANY COMMON COUNCIL

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April 24, 2020

Hon. Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand  
U.S. Senate  
478 Russell  
Washington, DC 20510

Hon. Paul Tonko  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2369 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Schumer and Senator Gillibrand and Representative Tonko,

As elected officials in Albany, New York, we see the direct impact of this devastating virus on our friends and neighbors. Not just those that are sick and are fighting for their lives alone, but our front line workers, risking their lives to keep our communities safe and functioning, our small business owners and their employees who are struggling, our children missing milestone events and vital hours of education.

Albany is strong. We are committed to doing what needs to be done to defeat this virus. But we need your help and we need it now. We are asking you to act swiftly on a new COVID-19 mitigation package that provides crucial support to New York State and its counties, cities, towns, and villages.

New York State is bearing a significant share of the cost of the public health response to COVID-19. Simultaneously, the economic impact of this crisis is having a disastrous impact on state and local tax revenues. We are facing a loss of at least \$15 billion in revenue, with an additional tens of millions of dollars in losses to municipalities, solely due to the impact of the pandemic.

In the absence of additional federal mitigation steps, any budget will, of necessity, be balanced on the backs of our residents, our patients, our students, other essential municipal workers, and

citizens across the state. The very people who are on the front lines of battling this illness for the nation.

At minimum, a new federal mitigation bill should:

- Provide aid to New York State and local governments for losses in income tax and sales tax revenues.
- Provide crucial additional support for state Medicaid costs. In particular, the temporary 6.2 percentage point increase to the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) rate must be increased to at least 12 percent and expanded to cover Medicaid recipients enrolled in Medicaid as a result of the Affordable Care Act Medicaid expansion.
- Establish a state fiscal stabilization fund for P-12 schools and public colleges and universities—using the model in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—so states are not forced to cut public education at any level during the expected recession.

Our proud health care workers are on the front lines of this pandemic and need support.

The next federal stimulus package must protect their safety, recognize their life-saving contributions—at significant personal risk to themselves and their families—and protect the state public hospitals and the public medical, nursing, and allied health professions schools where they work and train the next generation of health care workers.

At minimum, a new federal stimulus bill should:

- Provide additional support to cover the ever-increasing costs associated with providing desperately needed personal protective equipment to health care workers fighting on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis.
- Include funding for hazard pay at a rate of 50 percent of base salary for essential workers, including all health care workers engaged in COVID-19 response.
- Provide emergency funding for our state public hospitals and academic medical centers to support them through catastrophic drops in revenue associated with the cancellation of elective surgery and other non-COVID-19 medical procedures as they prepare for and respond to the coronavirus crisis.

It is becoming increasingly evident that there are clear racial disparities in our health care system. The COVID-19 crisis has shined a light on them. We have a shortage of doctors and health care professionals in urban and rural areas, and we have a shortage of health care providers who are representative of communities of color.

To address these issues and the future crisis of an aging population of health care workers, a new financial mitigation plan should include:

- Funding to expand enrollment and class sizes at public medical, nursing, and allied health professions schools.
- Initiatives to increase the enrollment of students from under-represented communities in medical school.

As fellow elected officials, we believe that we need leadership from Washington, DC that protects and strengthens our states.

New York is on the front line of this battle and we cannot be left to fight it alone.

Respectfully yours,

**CITY OF ALBANY COMMON COUNCIL**

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Council Majority Leader, Ward 13. Hon. Ginnie Farrell

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