



ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE

HON. JOHN J. MILLS

**CHAIRMAN OF THE LEGISLATURE
11TH DISTRICT LEGISLATOR**

April 22, 2015

Hon. Mark C. Poloncarz
County Executive
95 Franklin St.
Buffalo, New York 14202

Executive Poloncarz,

Over the past few weeks, Erie County has been engaged with the State of New York in negotiations that could decide the fate of the former Route 219 Bridge that traverses Cattaraugus Creek to connect Erie and Cattaraugus counties.

Historically, I have been opposed to transferring this bridge to Erie and Cattaraugus counties, even as recently as March I raised concerns and opposition. My concerns centered on the costs to replace and maintain the bridge, as well as any unforeseen costs that might come forward.

Even after listening to all the conversations taking place, some of these concerns still exist, however I now believe it's time to take action and show leadership.

We all know this bridge is critical to the communities surrounding it. It is a vital transportation route through the heart of southern Erie County that brings consumers to local businesses and towns. More than 90 small businesses in Springville depend on this bridge to survive. When the bridge was under emergency repair in 2012, businesses and residents felt the effects of the closure. Fortunately, we have an opportunity available to us that would ensure the survival of these communities.

Due to the efforts of Senator Gallivan, Senator Young and Governor Cuomo \$20 million was secured to build a state-of-the-art bridge that would replace the current deteriorating structure, as well as a commitment of \$300,000 to help with future maintenance costs. This is not a small commitment. It is an investment from the State of New York that will be directed to a long standing public safety concern and economic driver.

If Erie County cannot come to an agreement with the state, not only will we lose out on the committed funding, but the State of New York could permanently abandon the bridge as is its right under state law.

Erie County and its residents would be left with a 652 -foot long eyesore. We cannot fully predict what the impact would be on the local economy if the bridge closed, but we can safely assume that sales tax revenues would plummet and some businesses might be forced to close.

Local officials and the business community want this issue resolved as soon as possible. They have seen enough of the “kicking the can down the road” mentality, and while there are concerns related to the county taking ownership of the bridge, we cannot afford the alternative.

I believe we need to step up to the plate.

I strongly urge you to consider the offer from the State of New York. The funding committed during the budget process is at risk of being lost. This could be our only chance to protect businesses in the area, create local construction jobs and preserve the local economy. This is not a time to play a dangerous game of chicken that we are likely to lose.

I appreciate your consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,



John J. Mills
Chairman Erie County Legislature