



STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW

ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

March 16, 2021

Hon. April N.M. Baskin
Chairwoman
Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Chair Baskin:

With nearly \$180 million earmarked for Erie County in the most recent round of stimulus funding from Washington, we have a real opportunity to help the taxpayers of Erie County. We have a chance to do something that directly helps. The shutdowns have devastated our economy and we must act to revive our region once again.

I propose that your Honorable Body take necessary action to provide tax relief to county taxpayers. The best way we can help residents is by using \$128 million of the funding in the form of a property tax rebate. The remaining funds should be used to repair our deteriorating infrastructure.

Breakdown of \$178,180,000:

- Tax Rebate: \$128,180,000 (72%)
- Infrastructure: \$50,000,000 (28%)

Focusing \$128,180,000 on relief for taxpayers, is a nearly 45% savings on most 2021 property tax bills. The average rebate check based on a tax rate of \$4.43* per \$1,000 can be found below. Taxpayers in Erie County are struggling. We must focus on supporting them.

Assessed Property	Approximate Rebate Check
\$100,000	\$200
\$150,000	\$300
\$200,000	\$400
\$250,000	\$500
\$300,000	\$600
\$350,000	\$700
\$400,000	\$800
\$450,000	\$900
\$500,000	\$1,000

**Source: 2021 Budget: Message and Summary – www.erie.gov/budget*

Last year, Erie County received \$160 million in CARES Act funding. My office reported to your Honorable Body on a consistent basis the many concerns surrounding the use of those funds. Overtime costs reached almost \$6 million in 2020, padding pensions of a select few. A Health Commissioner taking home \$183,414 in overtime last year, on top of her \$202,315 salary, helps one family and one family only. With the nearly \$180 million coming to Erie County, we can help the community.

Unfortunately, Erie County's questionable use of federal funds made local and even national news. The Buffalo News wrote: "Erie County goes overboard, boosting pay for senior employees."

"Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz has a problem on his hands. The amount of overtime being paid to senior employees is getting a bit out of control."

Source Buffalo News – Editorial Board, February 1, 2021

Food expenditures reached over \$1 million. Our office compiled a report that shows this money was spent on pork chops, pots and pans, sheet pizzas and more. This didn't fight COVID.

Federal funds should not be used to line the pockets of the political connected or provide groceries. The \$20 million Back to Business program was not without controversy and impropriety with funding going to questionable businesses, and even closed businesses.

In 2021, we must be do better. The nearly \$180 million belongs to taxpayers and they should directly benefit through a tax rebate and investing in the infrastructure that we rely on every day.

Please contact my office with any questions. We are ready and willing to work with all our partners in County government to get this done as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



STEFAN I. MYCHAJLIW
Erie County Comptroller

cc: Hon. Mark Poloncarz, Erie County Executive
Mr. Bob Keating, Erie County Budget Director
Mr. Scott Bylewski, Erie County Director of Real Property Tax Services