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ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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BUSINESS GRANT AWARDED TO LEFT WING BLOGGER ON THE POLITICAL PAYROLL OF POLONCARZ AND DEMOCRATIC PARTY

*The politically connected to the County Executive cash in, while struggling business owners
like a Hamburg restaurant owned by three combat veterans denied*

(ERIE COUNTY, NY) – Erie County Comptroller Stefan Mychajliw questioned the process that awarded nearly \$20 million in taxpayer funded grants to struggling business owners a result of COVID-19 lockdowns. The program, which uses federal CARES Act funds, was supposed to help businesses to keep doors open because of the global pandemic. 43North managed the funds and determined which applicants would receive the grant money. But the list of awardees shows the process was flawed, lacked transparency, picked winners and losers, and put the politically connected to the front of the line.

43 North refused to show the Office of Erie County Comptroller a list of “winners, businesses that were awarded grants, even though the information was shared with Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz, the Erie County Legislature and even a local media outlet. 43 North falsely claimed a list did not exist, when in fact a list was publicly posted by media on Friday, December 11th, 2020

The Comptroller once again requested from 43 North information about who received business grants, who did not, how public tax dollars were spent on advertising, were public funds used for administrators at 43 North and what criteria was used to determine who would get the business grants.

“43 North claimed a list of awardees did not exist. It does. It was publicly posted by a local media outlet. Why the secrecy? Why try to prevent the Taxpayer’s Watchdog from reviewing a list of grant ‘winners.’ I will remind 43 North these are public tax dollars. Hard working families paid taxes that funded these grants. What are they hiding? This secretive process demands accountability. I will take whatever legal steps necessary to ensure taxpayers have a full accounting of this secretive awarding of public dollars. Maybe it is because someone on the political payrolls of Mark Poloncarz, the Erie County Democratic Committee and Political Party Boss Jeremy Zellner was awarded a \$10,000 taxpayer funded grant,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

On the list of 43 North awardees posted on a local media website, but later taken down, one of the grant recipients is a left-wing political blogger that attacks Republicans. According to the list of grant winners posted by WGRZ.com, WNY Media was awarded a \$10,000 taxpayer funded grant. This company is on the political payrolls of the politically connected, including Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz.

The political committee for Mark Poloncarz, the Erie County Democratic and the Jeremy Zellner for ECDC Chair has WNY Media on all their political payrolls. As a paid democratic political operative, WNY Media provides media, internet, editing and videography services to leaders of the party and attacks Republicans on the company website. Meanwhile, many other businesses struggling to keep the lights on across Erie County, and with employees now out of work received, nothing.

“A politically connected left wing blogger who trashes Republicans and Conservatives, and tweets vile posts receives \$10,000 in taxpayer funded grants, while businesses like a Hamburg restaurant operated by three combat veterans, one of them 100% disabled, gets nothing. That is a slap in the face to veterans and those that fought defending freedom here at home and around the world. Any criteria that would suggest this left-wing blogger paid by Mark Poloncarz is more important than our veterans. Once again, friends and family of Mark Poloncarz are profiting from a worldwide pandemic, while combat veterans and Hamburg restaurant owners are denied,” said Comptroller Mychajliw.

The letter demands from 43North, including the list of businesses that were not awarded grants.

“The public needs to feel confident that any federal dollars Erie County receives to help with the COVID crisis is being spent appropriately. There has been no transparency in this process. Furthermore, I am deeply troubled by the blatant favoritism shown. This is not what the CARES Act funding was intended for. These grants should be given to hardworking business owners struggling to survive, not political insiders who only serve to trash, admonish, ridicule, and try to destroy the reputations of those who simply don’t agree with them,” concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

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