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ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

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MYCHAJLIW TO FEDS: INVESTIGATE CUOMO FOR BLOCKING ELECTIVE SURGERIES IN ERIE COUNTY

Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr. tells Governor to stop punishing Erie County hospitals for standing up for its patients

(ERIE COUNTY, NY) –Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr. is requesting the federal government investigate why New York Governor Andrew Cuomo is refusing to allow some Erie County hospitals to resume elective surgeries like the rest of the state, stating his actions are punitive in nature. It is the belief of Erie County's Chief Fiscal Officer that because our region's hospitals refused to hand over ventilators when Governor Cuomo threatened to confiscate them during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic. Governor Cuomo's goal was to take ventilators from hospitals in Erie County and ship them to New York City health care providers.

At this time there is no factual, scientific or data driven reason for New York State to continue blocking some Erie County hospitals from performing elective surgeries, considering the region successfully hit many benchmarks to open up the local economy:

- Erie County is the only region outside the five boroughs of New York City still not allowed to perform elective surgeries
- Other counties with higher COVID-19 cases have been given approval to restart these procedures

"When Governor Cuomo threatened to seize ventilators from Erie County hospitals they resisted. The Governor is now punishing them for standing up to him. He's refusing to allow elective surgeries at some hospitals here. This is sick, punitive payback that punishes innocent patients. There is no other plausible explanation other than petty political payback," said Erie County Comptroller Stefan I. Mychajliw Jr.

New York State has only allowed elective surgeries to resume at some Erie County health care facilities and hospitals. The Governor has refused to grant waivers allowing these procedures to resume at Kaleida facilities and all ambulatory surgery centers.

"I believe Governor Cuomo is playing with people's lives to settle a score," said Comptroller Mychajliw. "When he threatened to take needed ventilators from our region, many health facilities in Erie County respectfully resisted and said 'no, they're needed here.' Now cancer patients and those with other life threatening and quality of life issues cannot get the care they so desperately need."

Erie County has met every benchmark to resume elective surgeries at all Erie County hospitals. Comptroller Mychajliw sent a letter to Governor Cuomo and Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul one week ago seeking an explanation as to why all hospitals in Erie County had not yet been allowed to resume elective surgeries, and request they immediately be allowed to do so. To date there has been no response from the Governor's office.

Not only is Governor Cuomo putting the lives of Erie County residents at risk, he's also putting the financial health of these facilities in peril. Revenue derived from elective surgeries are necessary to maintain fiscal viability. Most elective surgeries are quite serious and necessary for the potential survival of patients. In many cases these elective surgeries are not "optional" and even help treat patients with cancer related conditions. Elective surgeries provide significant portion of funding for hospitals. Health care systems are required to apply for waivers to the New York State Department of Health in order to resume elective surgeries.

"Sports teams can resume training camps. Dentist offices can re-open. You can get your hair cut again. Governor Cuomo is fine with thousands protesting and rioting in confined spaces. But cancer patients cannot receive health care because someone dared challenged the Governor about ventilators. That's not leadership, that's pettiness. It's dangerous. The federal government needs to step in. The State of New York cannot investigate themselves. I'm not afraid to speak up. Other elected leaders should follow and join the call to resume elective surgeries at all Erie County hospitals," concluded Comptroller Mychajliw.

In his letter to the federal government, Comptroller Mychajliw concluded his correspondence with an email from a constituent, sharing their pain and concerns over not being able to receive an elective surgery:

"I am writing to you as a concerned citizen of Erie County. I saw your letter to the governor and lieutenant governor about elective surgeries. I was scheduled to have hand surgery March 13th. A couple days before I got put on an antibiotic due (to) a sinus infection. The next week everything (shut) down. My affected hand is my right hand, my writing hand. My job requires me to type and now I am out of work on short term (disability) until I have surgery. I work for (REDACTED) and they are giving me a hard time, since my doctor (can't) give them a surgery date. I am starting to have pain in my left hand due to issues in my right hand. I don't want permanent damage. I am a single mom and can't afford to lose my job or be completely disabled. I have been reaching out to doctors in other counties but they are so far booked out just for the consultation. Erie County is in phase 2 and if we can open hair salons why can't elective surgeries? My Dr. works out of (REDACTED) and not a hospital. I know I am not the only one in this situation and so I hope you can be the voice for others like me."

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