



March 9, 2021

Mr. Robert Keating
Director, Budget and Management
95 Franklin Street – 16th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

Re: Follow-up on accounting of COVID-19 emergency funding

Director Keating,

Comm. 6E-22 (2020) was submitted to the Erie County Legislature for immediate consideration on March 16, 2020. This legislation was unanimously approved by the Erie County Legislature, and gave your office significantly-expanded authority to deal with unique circumstances that were being presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On the initial passage of Comm. 6E-22 (2020), Erie County was in the midst of its first surge in COVID-19 cases, with little known about the disease. In order to address any pressing needs, the Legislature provided the expansion of the County Executive's ability to spend COVID-19 relief funds. The initial resolution called for a report on actions taken to be provided after the emergency ended. This clause read;

Resolved, that because the Legislature is proactively approving of the appropriation of up to \$5 million of 2019 surplus funds to be spent in 2020 without knowing any details, at the conclusion of the coronavirus COVID-19 emergency, the Division of Budget and Management and Department of Health will submit a detailed report to the Legislature detailing all costs associated with the crisis and response (including personnel expense and overtime costs), all vendor payments and new jobs/positions created by the administration to address the coronavirus crisis;

In April 2020, Erie County received an additional \$160 million dollars to assist with COVID-19 related expenses. The vast majority of this money was spent under the same authority authorized in Comm. 6E-22 (2020).

While we understand the COVID-19 pandemic continues and government must still do everything we can to combat it, the spread of the virus has been greatly reduced. Additionally, as a result of increased vaccine rollout, proper social distancing, and community diligence, we are approaching the "home stretch" on our way back to "normal."

Since it has been one year since the creation of the COVID-19 emergency fund, we seek a full accounting of all actions and expenditures taken pursuant to Executive Orders and/or any authority granted under Comm. 6E-22 (2020). The report will help with transparency, and should include the following information pursuant to the amendment passed to Comm. 6E-22 (2020), cited above:

- 1) Every expenditure/action made pursuant to any Executive Order to address the coronavirus crisis;
- 2) Every expenditure made pursuant to the powers granted in Comm. 6E-22 (2020);
 - a. Information regarding personnel costs and overtime expenses;
 - b. All vendor payments made to help address the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - c. All new jobs/positions created to address the COVID-19 pandemic;

Please note, this request is not intended to eliminate the request in Comm. 6E-22 (2020), as amended. That information will still be of interest when the pandemic response has ended and there is no longer a state of emergency.

As you know, Congress has recently passed a new relief bill, which would reportedly send Erie County \$178 million, and we believe it is important that the aid already received and spent is properly reviewed and understood before Erie County embarks on appropriating more.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your anticipated response.

Sincerely,



Joseph C. Lorigo
Minority Leader, Erie County Legislature
Erie County Legislator, District 10



Frank J. Todaro
Erie County Legislator, District 8



Christopher D. Greene
Erie County Legislator, District 6



John J. Mills
Erie County Legislator, District 11