



SENATOR RACHEL MAY  
CHAIR  
ASSEMBLYMAN ANGELO SANTABARBARA  
CHAIR

STATE OF NEW YORK  
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON RURAL RESOURCES

April 22, 2020

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Minority Leader, United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schumer,

We write to you today to express our concerns regarding the impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on rural communities and to express our support for the next federal economic stimulus bill to include funding based on the Rebuild Rural America Act.

Rural New York is home to approximately 17 percent of New Yorkers, or 3.3 million people. New York is a leading agricultural state in a range of commodities, including dairy, apples, maple syrup, and wine. Rural areas provide natural resources that much of the country depends on for food, energy, water, and recreation. Yet, despite the essential role they serve, rural areas are notoriously forgotten and critically underfunded.

Even before the current pandemic, rural communities were struggling to fund and operate aging health care and transportation systems. Broadband service is inefficient or nonexistent, which puts rural residents at a disadvantage in accessing information, obtaining health and legal services, advancing education, and even working. Despite the inequities they face, rural communities provide not only the nation, but the world with a safe and affordable food supply.

Due to the disastrous impact of COVID-19, rural communities struggle now more than ever to survive. New York State's projected \$15 billion revenue shortfall, together with lost tax revenue in county and local budgets, will force job losses and cuts to important rural programs, at a time when costs for health care, emergency services, and managing supply chains have never been higher. Only the federal government has the resources to immediately keep states and localities solvent.

We urge Congress to include robust funding for states and localities in its next COVID-19 economic relief package with a focus on rural communities. We applaud Senator Gillibrand and Congressman Delgado for requesting \$50 billion based on the Rebuild Rural America Act introduced in October 2019. Administered through flexible block grants, this funding would allow small towns, counties, and rural communities to rebuild their economies and to continue to battle COVID-19. We also endorse the idea that the United States Department of Agriculture should form a rural task force to prioritize the needs of rural communities.

Sincerely,



**Rachel May**  
Senator, 53rd District  
Chair, Legislative Commission on Rural Resources  
Chair, Committee on Aging



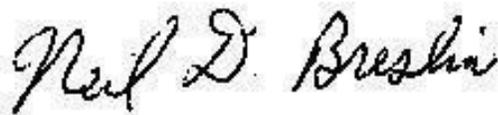
**Angelo Santabarbara**  
Assemblyman, 111th District  
Co-Chair, Legislative Commission on Rural Resources  
Chair, Subcommittee on Autism Spectrum Disorders



**Jen Metzger**  
Senator, 42nd District  
Chair, Committee on Agriculture



**Carrie Woerner**  
Assemblywoman, 113th District  
Chair, Subcommittee on Agricultural Production and Technology



**Neil Breslin**  
Senator, 44th District  
Chair, Committee on Insurance



**Donna Lupardo**  
Assemblywoman, 123rd District  
Chair, Committee on Agriculture

cc:

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand, United States Senate  
The Honorable Antonio Delgado, United States House of Representatives  
Secretary Sonny Perdue, United States Department of Agriculture  
Commissioner Richard Ball, New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets  
Stephen Acquario, Executive Director, New York State Association of Counties  
Peter Baynes, Executive Director, New York State Conference of Mayors  
David Fisher, President, New York Farm Bureau