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Hochul seeks new COVID funding

Issues letter to NYS congressional delegation requesting additional federal funding for national COVID-19 response

Funding would support fight against virus variants; ensure adequate testing, vaccine & booster supply

As additional recommended booster doses undergo federal review, state stands ready to distribute to eligible New Yorkers

Gov. Kathy Hochul issued a letter to the New York congressional delegation "illustrating the need for additional federal funding for the national COVID-19 response to ensure preparedness for future variants. This funding will help New Yorkers continue to move safely forward through the pandemic."

The full text of the letter is below:

Dear Senator Schumer, Senator Gillibrand and Members of the New York Congressional Delegation,

I write today to urge you to pass additional federal funding to support the national COVID-19 response. Tremendous progress has been made in our fight against this virus, but we have seen all too recently how we cannot afford to be complacent. New variants, such as the B.A.2 variant, continue to arise and, without additional federal funds, the proven tools we have come to rely on, most notably vaccines and boosters, may not be readily available for all New Yorkers. We cannot let partisan ideol-

ogy drive what must be a public health response.

In March 2020, New York was the warning shot to the rest of the country as to what COVID-19 could do to our communities. Without effective tests or treatment, the country found itself paralyzed, our economy ground to a halt, our schools closed their doors, and our health systems were strained beyond anything we could have imagined. Through the extraordinary efforts of our essential workers and the powers of science, we used our painful lessons to cultivate a more hopeful future.

Three months ago, New York was once again the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, this time battered by Omicron. Our daily case rates shattered previous records, reaching over 90,000 new cases a day, and again, our hospitals were stretched. Yet despite the astronomical rise in caseloads, this time we had the nation's medicine cabinet stocked with effective vaccines, booster doses, testing, and treatment. These tools made all the difference, and were available to us because of decisive action by you and your colleagues in Congress through previous relief and preparedness legislation like the American Rescue Plan.

This desperately needed federal support allowed us to keep our

schools open, equipping every student with rapid tests to ensure their safety. We were able to keep our businesses open, using common sense approaches such as vaccine or mask protocols. We established test sites across the state and, with help from many of you, called on the federal government to partner with us to set up testing sites to ensure every New Yorker who needed a test got one. Most critically, we had over 76% of our residents fully vaccinated, and 56% of those eligible boosted. Without these life-saving vaccines, we would have faced an even darker winter.

With the rise of the B.A.2 sub-variant, we are again laying the groundwork to ensure our State is ready and able to meet this virus head on. This includes ensuring we have the testing capacity up and running so that supply meets demand and making sure booster doses and FDA-authorized treatments are stationed around the state for all eligible New Yorkers to receive them.

And finally, as additional booster doses undergo review by the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, New York State stands ready to distribute these recommended doses to eligible New Yorkers.

I firmly believe it was our strong

vaccination program that allowed us to get through the unprecedented wave of COVID-19. Should B.A.2 follow the trajectory of Omicron, ensuring our residents have access to an additional booster will be a critical component of our response. Without additional federal funding, access to this necessary tool may be limited. COVID has proven time and time again to be unpredictable, wreaking havoc over red and blue states alike. Vaccines remain our best defense against severe disease and hospitalization - now is not the time to be complacent.

I urge you to work with your colleagues across Congress to find a path forward to ensure that we never repeat those dark days of March 2020. We must ensure the necessary resources are in place to continue to respond to COVID-19, while protecting the current commitments from the federal government, including State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

Now is the time to pass robust federal funding so that the nation's medicine cabinet remains stocked, all of our residents can be boosted, our businesses and schools stay open, and we can move safely forward through this pandemic.

Sincerely, Governor Kathy Hochul

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SUBMITTED BY THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TAXATION FINANCE

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Niagara County Tribune/Sentinel

Founded February 14, 1987

PUBLISHER Skip Mazenauer GM/MANAGING EDITOR Joshua Maloni EDITOR IN CHIEF/SENTINEL EDITOR Terrence P. Duffy WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA EDITORS Joshua Maloni, Lucia Spiritosanto, Toni Snyder ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES Colleen Rebbmann, Jeff Calarco, Marcy Lombardo CIRCULATION Kim Wendt ACCOUNTING/OFFICE MANAGER Kim Wendt

PRODUCTION MANAGER/ GRAPHIC DESIGNER Wendy Juzwiczki GRAPHIC DESIGNERS Lucia Spiritosanto, Toni Snyder CLASSIFIED MANAGER Toni Snyder ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Jennifer Walowitz CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS/REPORTERS Michael J. Billoni, Kevin and Dawn Cobello, Michael DePietro, Karen Keefe, Nathan Keefe, Wayne Peters, Mark Williams Jr., David Yarger

2022 Niagara Frontier Publications 1859 Whitehaven Road Grand Island, N.Y. 14072

Phone (716) 773-7676 Fax (716) 773-7190

Editorial:

Tribune@wnypapers.com Dispatch@wnypapers.com Sentinel@wnypapers.com

Advertising:

NFPDesign@wnypapers.com Classifieds:

NFPClassifieds@wnypapers.com Circulation:

NFPCirculation@wnypapers.com Legals:

legalnotice@wnypapers.com Website:

wnypapers.com

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The Tribune is published weekly.

Display Ads Deadline: MONDAY 5 PM

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