



HON. ANDREW JOYCE
CHAIRMAN

ALBANY COUNTY LEGISLATURE
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July 20, 2021

Hon. Patricia Fahy
New York State Assembly
LOB, Room 452
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. John McDonald
New York State Assembly
LOB, Room 417
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Phil Steck
New York State Assembly
LOB, Room 627
Albany, NY 12248

Hon. Neil Breslin
New York State Senate
172 State St., Room 430C
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Michelle Hinchey
New York State Senate
LOB, Room 902
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Assemblymembers Fahy, McDonald, Steck, and Senators Breslin and Hinchey,

Given the lifting of Governor Cuomo's State of Emergency, remote meetings are no longer permitted. As one of many county governments who have spent the last year learning about the benefits of remote meetings, we ask you to consider amending the Public Officers Law to allow for the continuance of the robust public meetings which occurred during the temporary suspension of the Open Meetings Law during the COVID-19 pandemic.

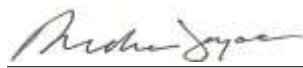
In March of last year, remote meetings became the only way our body could safely continue our public function. It quickly became apparent how useful the option was. Our meetings were run through Zoom and our participation levels, both of the membership and the public, rose dramatically. During the pandemic, our meetings became more accessible and inclusive and we had speakers from across the country participating from the comfort of their homes and offices. Moreover, we saw an increase in the public's viewing of our committee meetings, some of which were rarely attended by the public when they were in person.

Equally important are the lesser known environmental benefits of remote meetings. Occasionally, we have meetings or public hearings that take only a few minutes from start to finish. Instead of having the 39 members of the Albany County Legislature and all associated staff driving into downtown Albany, they participated from their homes or offices. The toll on the environment caused by driving from Berne or Altamont to the County Seat for such meetings is entirely wasteful and unnecessary.

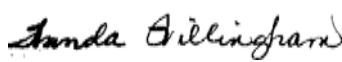
The Members of the Albany County Legislature support a modification to Public Officers Law § 103(c) to strike the requirement of public in-person access to every site where a member of a public body participates in a remote meeting, so long as the public has an opportunity to attend the meeting either remotely or at a predetermined, public location. Doing so would allow for the continuation of open meetings without any fear of the public not being able to observe the actions of public officers.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Hon. Andrew Joyce
Chair, Albany County Legislature



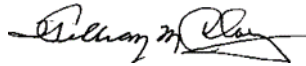
Hon. Wanda Willingham
Deputy Chair, Albany County Legislature



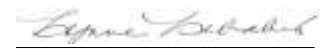
Hon. Dennis Feeney
Majority Leader



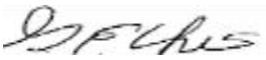
Hon. Frank Mauriello
Minority Leader



Hon. William Clay
Chair, Legislative Black Caucus



Hon. Lynne Lekakis
Deputy Majority Leader



Hon. Gil Ethier
Deputy Majority Leader



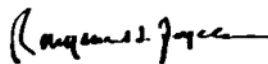
Hon. Jeffrey Kuhn
Co-chair, Rules Reform & Return
to Chambers Task Force



Hon. Jeff Perlee
Co-chair, Rules Reform &
Return to Chambers Task Force



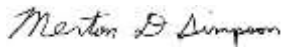
Hon. Carolyn McLaughlin



Hon. Raymond Joyce



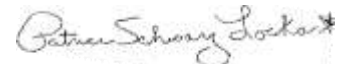
Hon. Joseph O'Brien



Hon. Merton Simpson



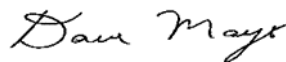
Hon. Robert Beston



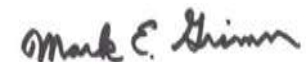
Hon. Patrice Lockart



Hon. Norma Chapman



Hon. David Mayo



Hon. Mark Grimm



Hon. Matthew Peter



Hon. Peter Tunny



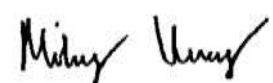
Hon. Dustin Reidy



Hon. Samuel Fein



Hon. Paul Burgdorf



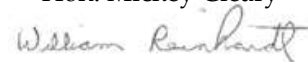
Hon. Mickey Cleary



Hon. Beroro Efekoro




Hon. Nathan Bruschi



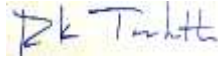
Hon. William Reinhardt



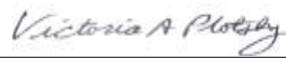
Hon. Joanne Cunningham



Hon. Matthew Miller



Hon. Richard Touchette



Hon. Victoria Plotsky



Hon. Chris Smith

CC: Mark Lavigne, NYSAC