



STATE OF NEW YORK  
**EXECUTIVE CHAMBER**  
ALBANY 12224

**KATHY HOCHUL**  
GOVERNOR

January 20, 2022

The Honorable James Clyburn  
Chairman  
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus  
Crisis  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Scalise  
Ranking Member  
Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus  
Crisis  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Clyburn, Ranking Member Scalise, and Members of the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis:

Thank you for the opportunity to share New York State's perspective on and response strategies to the COVID-19 pandemic. New York State's close coordination with the federal government has proven critical to ensuring an effective and targeted response. States continue to be at the forefront of pandemic response, and while there are many components to an effective response, I take this opportunity to highlight three core principles guiding my administration's efforts: keeping our children in school, preserving our hospitals and protecting our healthcare workers, and encouraging economic recovery.

As I noted in my recent State of the State address, New Yorkers deserve a nimble government to support the needs of its constituents. One that not only responds to the COVID-19 pandemic but also rebuilds healthcare and teacher workforces; speeds up economic growth to create good-paying, middle class jobs; strengthens infrastructure; confronts climate change; and provides necessary services to help the public stay healthy and safe.

New York State was among the first and hardest hit by the pandemic. Nearly two years later, we have evolved our pandemic response to meet the latest challenges, including those brought by the winter surge and the Omicron variant. Upon taking office in August last year, I understood my role as Governor was to be prepared to lead this state under any condition. Immediately my administration enacted a comprehensive pandemic plan – one designed to adjust the New York response as new variants emerge.

The Omicron variant allowed my Administration to apply lessons learned while also adjusting to new factors in the State's response. New York is doing everything possible to keep New Yorkers healthy, including: setting policies and distributing resources to make New York State's

vaccination rate one of the highest in the country; activating a coordinated, statewide vaccination and testing operation; deploying medical professionals and support staff from the New York National Guard to our hospitals and nursing homes; and sending out 64 million tests across the state. All of these efforts are predicated upon a strong operational and communication effort between my Administration and stakeholders across the State, including hospitals, local departments of health, and elected officials, to ensure effective and timely information sharing and resource distribution.

As this Committee continues its oversight work in the wake of the trillions in federal pandemic relief funding sent to states and local communities, the ever-changing public health landscape must be viewed in the context of how states are continuing to support our communities. New York State is instituting sensible, simple and safe mitigation practices to allow our residents to live as normal as possible.

### *Keeping Our Children in School*

The last school year taught us that our children, families, teachers, and faculty are not meant to operate with remote learning full time. COVID-19 may be a physical disease, but it has created a mental crisis among our children and exponentially compounded the challenges of having a family and running a household. On the first day of my Administration, I implemented a mask requirement in our schools. With the launch of pediatric vaccines, New York State has held hundreds of pop-up vaccination sites, including at our schools, to make it as easy as possible to vaccinate our children.

The emergence of Omicron brought a new sense of urgency to keeping our schools safe, which is why my Administration has purchased 64 million rapid tests, with schools as the primary destination for these tests. We are ensuring that all New York State school districts have the tests they need to implement test-to-stay, and I applaud the Biden-Harris Administration for its recent announcement expanding available tests to schools by 10 million each month.

### *Preserving our Hospitals and Protecting our Healthcare Workers*

On September 27, 2021, I implemented the nation's first vaccination requirement for healthcare workers, with no option to test-out. I expanded this requirement to cover not only hospitals but also nursing homes and other congregate care facilities – which was upheld by the Supreme Court. Following the science, I issued the first-in-the-nation booster requirement for these same workers to protect against the continued spread and blunt the severity of the Omicron variant in our healthcare settings. To best protect our healthcare workers and our patients, it is critical that individuals walking into a healthcare facility know they are as protected as they can be from this devastating disease. I applaud the Biden Administration for following in New York's footsteps to ensure protection does not stop outside our state borders.

Even before the pandemic, the nation faced a chronic shortage of healthcare workers. Two years into this public health emergency, New York State has lost 3% of its healthcare workers – this puts the state 11% below where it would need to be by the end of 2022 to keep up with pre-pandemic projected demand. Workers are simply exhausted. Staffing remains among the most acute challenges we face in our healthcare system, and I urge the federal government to reinvigorate federal investment in these workers. While the Biden Administration has been responsive, we simply need more personnel. In my State of the State, I have proposed a series of steps to increase the healthcare workforce in New York by 20% in five years. To get there, we need to raise wages, invest in training and retention, and slash red tape. In my Executive Budget, I have put forward a proposal which

includes \$1.2 billion of state support for healthcare and mental hygiene worker retention bonuses, a \$500 million Cost-of-Living Adjustment to help raise wages for human services workers, and \$2.4 billion for healthcare capital infrastructure and improved lab capacity. I encourage Congress to work with states to identify how to best achieve this shared goal of a more robust and healthier healthcare workforce.

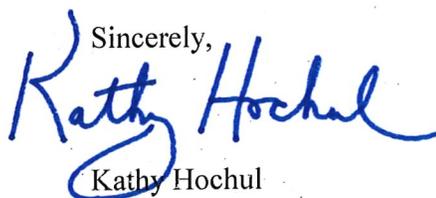
### *Encouraging Economic Recovery*

I have been very clear with New Yorkers that I do not intend to impose the economic lockdowns we saw in March 2020. To keep our businesses open, we must keep our residents safe. As part of this commitment, I implemented a mask or vaccine requirement for New York State businesses and venues – a simple and easy step to keep employees and patrons safe. Common sense approaches like this are key to getting us out of the pandemic, and I commend President Biden for instituting a mask mandate for airports, public transit, and federal buildings.

We cannot allow the virus to grip us so tightly it constrains us from looking to the future. This is why my agenda for New York State reflects more than a simple return to our pre-pandemic world and way of life. Instead, I see New Yorkers embracing the possibilities that come from times like these – banding together to adapt our public health policies and using the full force of government to improve the every-day lives of our communities in New York and across the country.

As my administration continues to respond to the needs of our families, neighbors, and friends, I look to former New Yorkers, like President Franklin Roosevelt, as an example of leadership. As President, Roosevelt rebuilt the economy from the ground up after the crash of '29 – more than giving people jobs, he gave people hope. The policies set in place by the New Deal helped individuals and families, spur decades of economic growth and led to the birth of the middle class. Again and again, he focused on the storm swirling around him, but kept one eye on the horizon, always planning for the day when the clouds would part. Rebuilding and recovering from disaster stronger and better prepared for the next crisis is the New York way.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to share the New York experience and appreciate Members' commitment to ensuring our country emerges from the pandemic stronger and more prepared.

Sincerely,  
  
Kathy Hochul  
Governor