



7 December 2020

Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the Assembly
LOB 932
Albany NY, 12248

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
President Pro Tempore and Majority Leader
LOB 907
188 State Street
Albany, NY 12247

Commissioner Basil Seggos
Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway Street
Albany, NY 12233

Commissioner Howard Zucker, M.D., J.D.
Corning Tower
Empire State Plaza,
Albany, NY 12237

Dear Assemblyman Heastie, Senator Stewart-Cousins, Commissioner Seggos and Commissioner Zucker,

On behalf of the over 7,000 members that include municipalities across the state, the New York Section of the American Water Works Association, the New York Rural Water Association, and the New York Water Environment Association represent, we would like to highlight for you of the silent, yet essential work that our utilities do to help protect New York residents from COVID-19.

As coronavirus cases continue to rise and a with vaccine on the horizon, our utilities continue to stay vigilant in not only protecting their essential staff, but also the communities they serve. Drinking water and water resource recovery operators are vital to the health and wellbeing of New York residents during this unprecedented time and, while we may not see them on the front lines, their work remains a key part of fighting the spread of this pandemic. The continued reliable water and wastewater plant operations during the pandemic are vital to public health protection. We would ask for your support to have essential plant operators vaccinated during the first phase of the roll out.

Water is critical for disinfection and sanitation to control the spread of COVID-19. One of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's top recommendations for halting the spread of the virus is to thoroughly and

frequently wash your hands. We have seen around the world the effect a lack of access to clean water can have on the spread of the coronavirus. Without the dedicated work of our utility operators, we would not be able to take these basic precautions to protect our health and wellbeing.

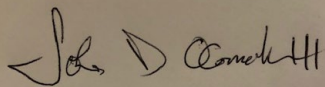
Additionally, wastewater utilities across the state are acting as early detection systems, giving towns and cities the ability to know when an outbreak occurs before positive test begin to spike. Their ability to track the spread of coronavirus on a large scale makes them a unique, vital, and cost effective method to identify hotspots before they can spread.

As individual utilities and municipalities, we continue to do everything in our power to ensure the continued safety of our operators. With the recent increase in cases state and nation-wide, now more than ever it is important that we are providing our essential utility workers with the support they need to be able to safely continue to do their job. We urge you to remember our utility operators as the essential workers they are, and make sure that, as front line workers, they receive vaccines as expeditiously as possible as they become available.

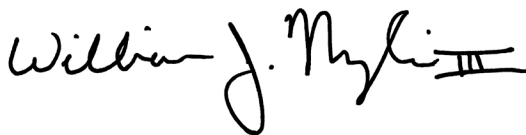
Sincerely,



Paul J. Ponturo, PE
NYSAWWA President



John O'Connell
NYRWA President



William J. Nylic, III
NYWEA President

CC:

Patricia Cerro – Reehil; Executive Director; NYWEA
Jamie Herman; Chief Executive Director; NYRWA
Jenny Ingrao; Executive Director; NYSAWWA