



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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'Southern Tier Lawmakers call on Gov. Hochul to Enhance Storm Recovery Efforts'

THOMAS F. O'MARA September 30, 2024

| ISSUE: **STORM RECOVERY**



ALBANY, NY (WENY) -- Several state lawmakers from the Southern Tier are calling on Governor Kathy Hochul to do more when it comes to the state's relief efforts after tropical storm Debby.

Read more from *WENY-TV*, "[Southern Tier Lawmakers call on Gov. Hochul to Enhance Storm Recovery Efforts](#)"

Full release below:

Canisteo, N.Y., September 27—In letters earlier this week to Governor Kathy Hochul in response to flash flooding in many area communities from Tropical Storm Debby in early August, State Senator Tom O’Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning), Assemblywoman Marjorie Byrnes (R,C-Caledonia), and Assemblyman Joe Giglio (R,C-Olean) are urging the governor to strengthen the state’s relief and recovery efforts to ensure that the state covers the local share of disaster-related costs, extend the deadline for impacted individuals to apply for direct state aid, eliminate the income threshold for primary residences to qualify for aid, and allow business owners to apply for state aid.

On September 16, Hochul announced “that applications are now available for income eligible homeowners affected by severe storms and flooding that occurred in New York State in July and August 2024. Under this program, administered by Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), emergency home repair assistance may be available to impacted homeowners who reside in the impacted counties below. Funding up to \$50,000 may be used for emergency housing repairs necessary to make the home safe, sanitary and habitable. Grants will be available on a first come, first served basis until funds are exhausted. Applications will be accepted until October 7, 2024.”

The state grant program covers Allegany and Steuben counties and, according to Hochul’s announcement, ‘funds are available to eligible homeowners for their primary residence where flood or insurance coverage or other forms of disaster recovery funds are not sufficient to return the home to a safe and habitable condition.’ Details on the “Resilient and Ready Home Repair Program” are available here: <https://hcr.ny.gov/resilient-and-ready-home-repair-programs>.

Additionally, earlier this week Hochul announced that her September 7th request for a Major Disaster Declaration to provide federal assistance to communities impacted by Tropical Storm Debby on August 8-10 has been approved. The declaration allows for federal financial assistance to support public infrastructure reconstruction efforts in Allegany, Broome, Delaware, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Ontario, Steuben, St. Lawrence and Yates counties.

While welcoming the availability of state and federal assistance, the area lawmakers are urging Hochul to strengthen the state's recovery and rebuilding response by:

fully assuming the local share of the disaster-related costs;

eliminating the current income thresholds for primary residences;

amending the current aid program to include businesses; and

extending the current October 7th deadline for applying for Emergency Repair Grant Funding for at least an additional 30 days until November 7th.

In their letter to the Governor, O'Mara, Palmesano, Byrnes, and Giglio wrote, "We strongly believe New York State needs to follow this model of comprehensive state direct assistance to most effectively address the forthcoming recovery and rebuilding efforts in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Debby."

The lawmakers are urging Hochul to extend "the Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) emergency repair grant funding deadline. We have been advised by Steuben County Officials and the Human Service Agencies that they are greatly concerned the deadline of October 7th does not provide the residents who were devastated by the flooding enough time to get their information together and file an application. As you know firsthand, the communities impacted by the flooding are very rural and three weeks to gather all the required

information and submit an application is simply not realistic. We strongly believe that the deadline for filing an application should be extended to a minimum of 30 days.”

In a separate letter to Hochul this week, the area legislators are also calling on the governor to establish “a long-overdue action to update and strengthen the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) permitting process that currently hinders the ability of local highway and public works departments, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and property owners, to undertake stream and streambank maintenance and repair.”

O’Mara, Palmesano, Byrnes, and Giglio wrote, “During your recent tour of the region and impacted areas in the aftermath of the Tropical Storm Debby flash flooding, you heard about the importance of this action firsthand, and repeatedly, from those who have been continually devastated because local governments and property owners are unable to undertake the consistent streambank hardening and streambed clearing that would better protect against these disasters....A process that authorizes their ability to undertake consistent and timely maintenance and prevention programs to protect their communities from future flash flooding events like this one is desperately needed and, we believe, warranted.”