



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Statement From Senator Patty Ritchie

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE July 16, 2019

| ISSUE: **MWBE (DIVISION OF MINORITY AND WOMEN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT)**



Last year, I cohosted a number of hearings around New York State—from Watertown to Manhattan—to gather feedback on the state’s Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) program. Throughout those sessions, my colleagues and I heard from a wide variety of business owners and other stakeholders who expressed concerns about the “one-size-fits-all” nature of the program. While it is well intentioned, the needs of New York City are not the same as the needs of Upstate New York.

On Monday, Governor Cuomo signed into law S.6575, which reauthorized the MWBE program and included changes that he says will enable more businesses to participate and benefit from the program.

While I appreciate the Governor recognizing the need to reform the program, I am disappointed changes suggested at our hearings were not included. Modifications proposed by stakeholders included that I believe would have benefited business owners across the state include:

- Simplifying the application process and expediting the review of paperwork;
- Placing MWBE personnel in Regional Empire State Development offices to enhance response times, while providing a local contact to avoid delays;
- Streamlining forms and requirements, including regional accommodation, instead of a 30-percent utilization goal; and
- Establishing a timeline to the certification decision to no more than 90 days.

Across our state, and especially in Upstate New York, local businesses are struggling. Had these changes been included in the measure signed into law Monday, we could have addressed the challenges faced by many businesses that are fighting every day to make ends meet.