



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Susan Serino

## SERINO RENEWS CALL FOR INVESTIGATION INTO STATE COVID-19 TEST SCANDAL; FOILS CONTRACTS

SUSAN SERINO September 16, 2022

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HYDE PARK, NY—Senator Sue Serino today is renewing her calls for an immediate investigation into the Hochul Administration’s purchasing of COVID-19 test kits from a political donor after the Albany Times Union revealed that California purchased the same test kits for 45 percent less than the State of New York paid. According to the report, if New York had paid the same price as California, it would have saved taxpayers \$286 million.

Senator Serino has also submitted a freedom of information law (FOIL) request with the Executive Chamber, the Department of Health, Empire State Development, and the Office of General Services requesting a copy of any no-bid contracts and purchases made by the state without Comptroller approval during the pandemic state of emergency.

*“Every day, I hear from residents who are struggling to make ends meet and it makes my blood boil when I think about what could have been done with that money to provide them relief,” said Senator Serino. “It is clear that both the Cuomo/Hochul Administrations used the COVID-19 state of emergency to circumvent the competitive bidding process and Comptroller oversight, and now New York’s taxpayers are stuck footing the bill for bad deals like this. As lawmakers, protecting taxpayer dollars and preserving public trust must be our top priorities which is why I am renewing my call for an immediate investigation, and why we will not stop pushing until New Yorkers get the answers they deserve.”*

According to reports, Governor Hochul’s Administration awarded a \$637 million state contract to Digital Gadgets for COVID-19 tests, despite multiple competitors offering a much cheaper price per test. In turn, Charles Tebele – the CEO of Digital Gadgets – hosted a large-money fundraiser for the Governor's re-election campaign which raised more than \$300,000. Mr. Tebele’s business partner and multiple family members also made large donations to Governor Hochul’s campaign.

Last week, Senator Serino wrote to Attorney General Letitia James and Albany County DA David Soares asking for an investigation into the matter.

Senator Serino sponsors a bill (S.5326) that would have ensured that the Comptroller would have been able to carry out appropriate and necessary oversight of state contracts even during state emergencies. Despite the clear need for such legislation, neither house in the Legislature advanced the bill.

A copy of the FOIL request is attached.

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