

RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
AND SMALL BUSINESS
LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION
ON RURAL RESOURCES

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



SENATOR
PAMELA A. HELMING
54TH DISTRICT

COMMITTEES
AGRICULTURE
HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION AND
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
RACING, GAMING AND WAGERING

April 9, 2020

Hon. Andrew Cuomo, Governor
State of New York
State Capitol – Executive Chamber
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Across New York State, farms are struggling as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Dairy farmers have been amongst the hardest hit. As I am sure you are already aware, the pandemic has dried up many of the outlets for milk and dairy products.

With the implementation of PAUSE NY and the closure or limited operations of typical outlets for dairy products, such as schools, colleges, restaurants and other institutions, the demand for milk products has been significantly reduced. As a result, farmers are being forced to waste millions of gallons of raw milk. To watch our local farmers dumping hundreds of gallons of a quality product is concerning for several reasons.

First, there is a significant and immediate economic loss to our local farm families. This of course, has a ripple effect and impacts many small businesses, suppliers and employers across the state.

In addition, I have heard from farmers and many others from across the state who are desperate to find a way to temporarily get the milk – or at least some of the milk -to those who do not have enough food.

And finally, my office has received calls from constituents asking why retailers are putting limits on the number of dairy products a customer may purchase when we have an abundance of milk.

Without assistance from the state and federal government, I fear we will see many of our farms close and go into foreclosure, resulting in tremendous job losses.

Governor, we have an amazing agriculture and markets team. Commissioner Ball is an outstanding leader and I am sure together you have investigated how best to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on our farmers.

If it has not already been done, I respectfully request that you urge the Federal government to use the CARES ACT funds designated for the USDA to help our dairy industry.

I also ask that you use your authority to implement the small business tax credits that were originally proposed in the Executive Budget. Our dairy farmers need these tax credits and any other assistance we can offer them now more than ever. It may even be time to consider a credit specifically for dumped milk.

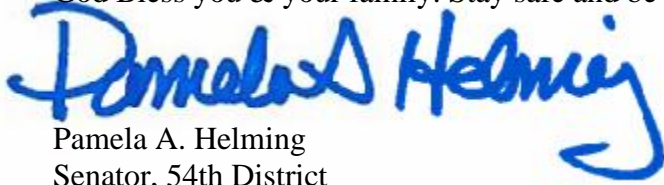
We can also help our farmers by doing everything possible to increase demand. This begins by working with our grocers to lift any purchasing limits so that all dairy products can move from the store shelf to the refrigerators of consumers without delay.

We also have a unique opportunity to help those living in food deserts. With the state's leadership and guidance, we can help our farmers and producers move more products to Foodlink and other food pantries. These agencies have seen an increased demand for assistance during this pandemic.

The farmers have the milk. The processors have the capacity to turn it into products and distribute. With your leadership, we can make this happen!

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I am hopeful that we can work together on this important issue on behalf of New York's farmers.

God Bless you & your family. Stay safe and be well,



Pamela A. Helming
Senator, 54th District

cc: Commissioner Ball