



Governor Kathy Hochul

VIA EMAIL

August 2, 2022

Re: Establishing a Commission to Assess NY's COVID Response

Dear Governor Hochul,

Thank you for officially announcing your plans to have a contractor assess New York's COVID-19 response. We urge you to go even further and establish a commission with subpoena power to better understand what went wrong and how New York government can better handle future pandemics.

The Request for Proposals is a step forward, and we appreciate that the contractor will be required to issue a final report, as we requested in our May letter. But the contractor will be limited in its power to interview those involved in the pandemic response, access documents, or work independently.

We believe that establishing a commission will help improve and guide the research of the contractor and give the public confidence that the review is independent and based on facts, not politics.

Our hope is the proposed commission will:

- **Include independent experts.** This should include some state officials involved in New York's COVID-19 response, as well as outside experts with robust backgrounds in public health.
- **Hold public hearings and meetings.** Consulting firms typically do not conduct public hearings or meetings, and hearings were not part of the RFP that

was issued. Establishing a commission would allow more public input by the New Yorkers who were affected by the pandemic.

- **Have full access to records and public officials.** We also hope that you will provide the contractor with full access to state COVID-19 records and data, and allow for the report to be published without edits from anyone in NYS government (except for any details that may invade personal privacy). Additionally, we believe the commission should have subpoena power so that it can interview officials and gain a clearer picture of what happened.

Our groups support the goals of this review and strongly believe that establishing a commission can help the state better meet those goals.

Please contact Tom Speaker at tom@reinventalbany.org or (929) 888-4683 or Bill Hammond at billh@empirecenter.org or (518) 858-2835, should you wish to discuss the matter further.

Sincerely,

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Bill Hammond
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