

Hon. Andrew Cuomo
New York State Governor
Capital Building
Albany, New York 12224

Re: Restarting New York

Dear Governor Cuomo:

Please authorize the lower-risk upstate regions in New York State to begin a phased reopening, starting with lower-risk business sectors such as manufacturing and office work where social distancing and other safety protocols can be maintained. These business sectors can be safely reopened consistent with CDC, OSHA, and other health and safety requirements.

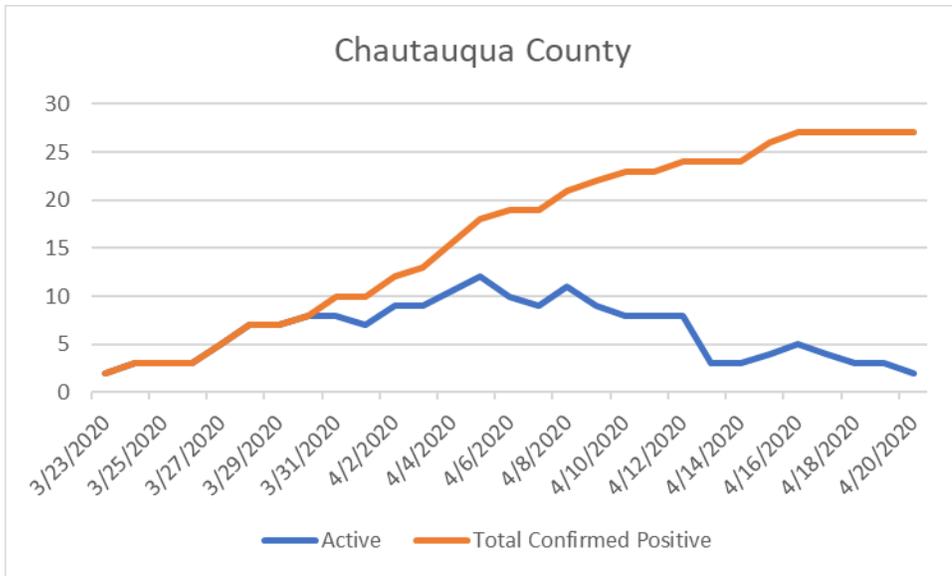
No-one will travel from high-risk areas to watch local employees enter a local manufacturing plant or a local office building. Higher density businesses that cater to visitors (such as restaurants, bars, amusement parks, entertainment venues, etc.) can reopen later, thereby minimizing travel from high-risk areas to low-risk areas. Higher density businesses can also be phased-in, with 25%, 50%, 75%, and eventually 100% occupancy.

The continued closure of the upstate economy is creating its own health care issues, including an increase in drug and alcohol overdoses, need for mental health services, and an increase in domestic violence and child sexual abuse. People are unable to schedule non-emergency elective surgery, receive non-prescribed physical therapy or chiropractic services, or schedule non-emergency dental work. Many of these patients continue to suffer from painful situations that can be corrected, such as knee or hip replacements. The availability of mental health counselling is also being adversely affected.

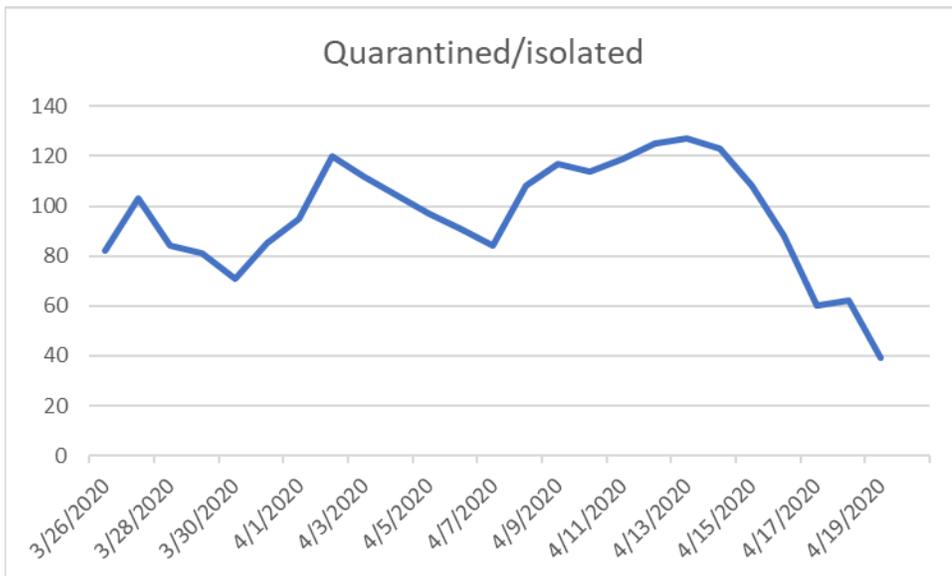
Unlike the greater New York City area, rural upstate New York does not have the high-risk factors that characterize widespread infection rates: there are no crowded subways or buses, crowded streets, crowded elevators, crowded office buildings, large apartment complexes, or a large homeless population.

In Chautauqua County, for example, data from the New York State Department of Health (NYS-DOH) documents a very low infection rate. As of today, Chautauqua County has only 25 confirmed cases and only 2 active cases, or about one active case for every 525 square miles. There have been no new cases for several days. By comparison, New York City with 303 square miles has 134,436 confirmed cases, or about 444 confirmed cases per square mile. Less than 4% of the high-risk individuals in Chautauqua County have tested positive, compared to nearly 50% for New York City. While the health care system in New York City is seriously stressed, Chautauqua County has no patients with COVID-19 in its local hospitals, ICUs, or on ventilators.

The current data indicates that the worst of this infection may have passed in Chautauqua County, as the number of active cases has dropped in the last few weeks:



More importantly, there has been a dramatic drop in the number of people in quarantine or isolation. These are the higher risk individuals identified as having been in contact with someone who tested positive, traveled to a high-risk area, or were symptomatic, based on aggressive contact tracing work done by our Health Department. Those in quarantine or isolation are the harbingers of possible future infections.



The data for Chautauqua County is consistent with many other upstate counties, which have very few active cases and few, if any, new cases. How long must they go without any new cases before they are allowed to begin rebuilding their devastated economies? There is very

little reason to keep these economies shut down when their low-risk businesses can be safely reopened with appropriate safety measures.

It is also important to remember that “nonessential businesses” are absolutely essential to the owners of those businesses and the employees who rely on those businesses to provide long-term financial stability to their families. Those who lose their homes, their business, or their livelihood by an unnecessarily protracted shut-down will never forgive you, especially if these businesses could have been safely reopened with appropriate safety protocols.

Please move as quickly as possible to safely restart the economy on a regional basis, beginning with lower-risk regions and lower-risk business sectors. Until we reopen, upstate manufacturing will continue to lose customers to their international and out-of-state competitors, many small businesses will face horrific financial challenges, and many employees will remain out-of-work. The longer these businesses are closed, the more difficult it will be for them to reopen and the greater the long-term damage to our economy.

Sincerely yours,

Andrew Goodell
Assemblyman

Cc: Hon. Michael Schmidt
Hon. Eric Gertler