



October 1, 2020

Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins
State Senate
Legislative Office Building
Albany, N.Y. 12247

Speaker Heastie
State Assembly
Legislative Office Building
Albany, N.Y. 12248

Via Email

Re: Basic Budget Transparency During COVID-19 Crisis: Please Publish “Withholding Notifications” from Division of Budget on Senate and Assembly Websites

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie,

We write to ask that you publish on the Senate and Assembly websites the withheld payments notices sent to you by the Budget Division. In the interest of basic public transparency and accountability, we ask you to publish these DOB notifications promptly after they are received. Our groups believe these DOB notifications are of great interest to the public because they allow New Yorkers to assess how the state and local government services they rely on are being affected during the budget crisis.

Section 1(f) of Chapter 53 of the Laws of 2020 requires the budget director to notify the legislative leaders of payments to be withheld. However, these notifications have not been shared with the public despite the impact the payments have on New Yorkers’ lives. The DOB notifications our groups have seen were published on September 16th by

the Empire Center, a nonprofit fiscal watchdog group. The Empire Center was provided the letters by the Senate following a request. (See link below.)

We ask you to publish past and future notifications on your websites as the letters are received in the coming months. Thank you for your help on this matter.

Sincerely,

John Kaehny
Executive Director
Reinvent Albany

Betsy Gotbaum
Executive Director
Citizens Union

Susan Lerner
Executive Director
Common Cause New York

Laura Ladd Bierman
Executive Director
League of Women Voters New York State

Blair Horner
Executive Director
NYPIRG

<https://www.empirecenter.org/publications/new-york-state-has-dug-itself-into-its-dee-pest-hole-on-record/>

Cc:

Senator Liz Krueger
Assemblymember Helene Weinstein
Senate Minority Leader Robert Ort
Assembly Minority Leader William Barclay