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NYSUT Suffolk Regional Office
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15 February 2021

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The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

With limited ability to travel and almost all indoor activities and events cancelled, the summer of 2020 saw record-breaking crowds across our New York State Parks. While living through an unprecedented pandemic, the membership of the New York State Lifeguard Corps rose to the occasion while quickly and efficiently rewriting protocols and standard operating procedures. The leadership of the NYSLC worked in consultation with Albany and all of the regions to make sure the patrons of our great park system had a safe environment to enjoy as our country battled COVID-19. Over 1,100 lifeguards across the state put their health and safety on the line when reporting for duty in order to provide an essential and professional lifesaving service to all visitors at New York State Parks.

Across the state, lifeguards ran thousands of water rescues and emerged from the water with limited COVID-19 personal protective equipment, reunited lost children with their parents, and provided lifesaving medical aid while our facilities were packed seven days a week. Without popular events like the Jones Beach Air Show or Fourth of July Fireworks, Long Island beaches were packed from sunrise to sunset, starting Memorial Day Weekend and extending into a warmer than usual post-season. They did this as over 4 million more visitors attended all state parks in 2020. The popular ocean beaches on Long Island saw an incredible increase in attendance, close to 2.2 million more than 2019.

As the Summer of 2021 quickly approaches, we ask for your support in providing the lifeguards employed by New York State the same availability to sign up for vaccinations that other first responders across the state have already attained. The professionalism and dedication of all the skilled lifeguards of New York State will only be enhanced this summer if they can have access to the same vaccines that other first responders already have.

We hereby request that lifeguards be designated as eligible to sign up for a vaccine appointment within the first responder category included in the current group 1B. As the wait times increase to get needles into the arms of New Yorkers, we cannot wait for opening day of the 2021 summer season.

Respectfully Yours,

Ryan P. Clark
President, New York State Lifeguard Corps

CC:

Dr. Howard Zucker MD, JD, LLM, Commissioner of Health
Commissioner Erik Kulleseid , NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historical Preservation
Adrienne Mazeau, Deputy Director Office of Public Health
Richard Alden, NYS Water Safety Director
Bryan Erwin, Foundation for Long Island State Parks Inc. Board of Commissioners, Chair
Laura Curran, Nassau County Executive
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Assemblymember Robert C. Carroll
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Assemblymember Michael J. Fitzpatrick
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Assemblymember Steve Englebright
Assemblymember Doug Smith
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Assemblymember Jarret Gandolfo
Assemblymember Steve Stern
Assemblymember Kimberly Jean-Pierre

Assemblymember Keith P. Brown
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Assemblymember John K. Mikulin
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