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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, February 3, 2023

LONG ISLAND STATE SENATORS BLAST STATE BUDGET HOUSING MANDATES

State Senators Call for Changes in the State Budget that Eliminate Local Government's Voice in Planning Their Communities' Growth

The Long Island State Senate delegation joined together to blast portions of the proposed State Budget that eliminate Long Island localities' home rule prerogatives as to zoning and right sizing communities. On February 1, 2023, Governor Kathy Hochul unveiled her \$227 billion state budget which included several proposals to increase the number of housing units available in New York. These proposals would strip local governments of their ability to properly right size communities and control growth and zoning. The Governor's proposals would replace locally elected officials' zoning prerogatives with Albany bureaucrats with a top-down approach deliberately designed to turn our suburban communities urban – literally imposing a 50 unit per acre housing requirement across mile-wide swaths of Nassau County's predominantly single family zoned communities. These efforts would effectively turn the country's first suburb, Nassau County, into an urban center with decisions being made not at a local level, but by bureaucrats in Albany. Worse yet, the Governor would have us believe it's for our own good.

Significantly, the Governor's proposal would require that the areas within a half mile radius of LIRR train stations in Nassau County be rezoned to accommodate an average of 50 residential unit per acre. Understanding that there are 502 acres within a mile-diameter circle and given the number of LIRR train stations in Nassau County, the Governor's proposal would allow, as of right now construction of over 1 million residential units in the areas around LIRR stations in Nassau County alone. To put this figure into context, as per the Census, Nassau County has 476,732 housing units.

In Suffolk County the per acre density requirements around LIRR stations would range from 15 units to 30 units per acre depending on the proximity of the LIRR station to NYC. Again, understanding that there are 502 acres within a mile-diameter circle and given the number of LIRR stations in Suffolk County and adjusting for distance, the Governor's proposal would allow as of right construction of over 475 thousand residential units in areas around LIRR stations in Suffolk County alone. To put this figure into context, as per the Census, Suffolk County has 578,940 housing units.

The Governor has not explained how the 54 school districts in Nassau County and 69 school districts in Suffolk County will be able to accommodate the children from these over 1 million new housing units and 475 thousand new housing units in Nassau County and Suffolk County respectively. Nor how the construction of these housing units will impact the Island's sole source aquifer. Or how the region will be able to expand the current infrastructure, including sewer systems and capacity, roads, and mass transit to accommodate the increased population that comes with the projected over 1.5 million new housing units in Nassau and Suffolk

Counties alone. We won't venture a guess on the number of cars the Governor's proposal will bring to our local roads and highways and the resulting "parking-lot effect" to traffic.

Lastly, there has been no consideration for the energy needs such a dramatic residential expansion would require including the sufficiency and stability of Long Island's electric grid in light of recent initiatives, again mandated from Albany, that would eliminate alternatives to heating our homes, including natural gas. There is serious doubt as to the ability of the electric grid to provide stable and sufficient electricity for the Island's current housing and building stock without adding the impossible strain this proposal would bring.

"The Governor's proposal is nothing less than an existential threat to our way of life that cannot be overstated or ignored. Although we acknowledge that there is a housing crisis in New York, the Governor needs to understand that she cannot mandate, legislate or regulate her way through this. Nor can she expect our communities to sit idly by while bureaucrats in Albany demolish the pillars of our suburban quality of life. I urge the Governor to turn away from this foolish and clumsy proposal, to work with our communities and local leaders to incentivize not just growth, but smart growth. There is a place for State involvement in this process, but this is not it. I know firsthand the power and innovation that local governments can bring to this issue without State interference. While Mayor of Mineola, we worked with the community to develop a master plan that allowed for transit oriented, residential development around Mineola's LIRR station. The result is over 1,000 units of housing built in Mineola over the past 10 years. It was done by building consensus for construction in the right area, in the right way, at the right time. Collaboration and shared best practices will work where this proposal will not.," said **Senator Jack M. Martins**.

"Affordable housing is a major concern for me and my colleagues. I have worked hard to help address this issue by bringing together local officials, residents and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to enact policies like the Peconic Bay Community Housing Fund," said **Senator Anthony Palumbo**. "What I am convinced won't work, is a top down, Albany centric approach that ignores the character and various needs of New York's diverse communities. Local governments, not Albany are in the best position to determine responsible growth in their communities, while factoring in infrastructure and resource concerns and the needs of residents."

"Governor Hochul's intentions for our suburban communities on Long Island are clear – she seeks to solve New York City's housing crisis by turning Long Island into the sixth borough of New York City. The proposals in the Governor's Executive Budget are a reckless and irresponsible attempt to defy both local government's right to control local zoning and the right of each and every Long Islander to preserve their safety and suburban quality of life, as well as, to protect the substantial investments they have made in their homes and communities. I will fight alongside my Long Island colleagues in State and local government to defend our suburban values and quality of life," said **Senator Rhoads**.

"Governor Hochul's plan is not realistic for the suburban communities of Nassau County, and especially those within my district," said **Senator Patricia Canzoneri-Fitzpatrick** of the 9th State Senate District. "Many Nassau residents fled from overdevelopment and unchecked urbanism in New York City and elsewhere, but now the Governor once again wants to bring it to their doorsteps – and not with any community input or consent, but rather by threat and decree. This is unacceptable. Our municipalities should retain the right to decide how their neighborhoods look and this proposal would strip them of their autonomy to oppose high density housing and predatory development. Edicts and commands from above have no place in a society that is meant to be governed by the democratic process.

Our school districts are already overcrowded, our infrastructure needs improvement, and the bottom line is that Nassau residents simply do not want this. I will vehemently oppose this budget so long as this policy of forcible rezoning remains part of it."

“Local control is extremely important for many who live on Long Island and we must never allow it to be replaced by Albany control. Our residents must continue to have a clear and realistic role in deciding the future of their communities and that should not be overruled by the top-down control Governor Hochul is proposing. We successfully joined together last year to protect the voice of those we serve and we remain committed to protecting the rights of every Long Islander,” stated **Senator Mario R. Mattera**.

"With a state budget of \$227 billion, it is no wonder New Yorkers are having a hard time finding housing or any other necessities, affordable. Heavy-handed Hochul’s generic vision of densifying the population and regulating our communities will erase the historic and unique neighborhoods we celebrate and preserve. The Governor has created a hierarchy, weaponizing the Attorney General against the people she is sworn to protect, removing local governments and the will of the people," said **Senator Alexis Weik**.

"Our partners in local government play a vital role in in the type of planning and development that affects our quality of life on a daily basis. To take a heavy-handed approach that bypasses our local elected officials is a big mistake that will end up causing more problems than it solves," said **Dean Murray, NY State Senator, 3rd District**

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