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## PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Tompkins Chamber, Community Partners Advocate for State and Local Aid in Virtual Roundtable**

(Ithaca, N.Y. 8/4/20) – The Tompkins Chamber hosted a virtual roundtable with community partners to discuss the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on their industries and stakeholders, and the importance of state and local aid being included in upcoming COVID-relief legislation.

The roundtable was facilitated by Tompkins Chamber President & CEO Jennifer Tavares and included participants:

- Martha Robertson, Legislator from Dryden and chair of the Tompkins Intergovernmental Relations Committee
- Dr. Jeff Matteson, Superintendent from TST BOCES
- Deb Mohlenhoff, AVP of College Relations & Chief of Staff, Tompkins Cortland Community College
- Kathy Schlather, Executive Director, Human Services Coalition.

Tavares kicked off the roundtable stating, “The coronavirus pandemic has had widespread economic impacts at many levels. The ways we work together are being impacted, and it’s important to understand what happens at different levels when we don’t have the resources we need.” Tavares continued, “Together we all have a shared goal of taking care of our communities, keeping people safe, restoring and revitalizing our economy, and helping everyone weather both the public health and economic aspects of this crisis. State and local aid are critical pieces of the support we need from Washington right now.”

Tompkins County Legislator Martha Robertson shared an outline of the various COVID-relief bills being considered by Congress, stating “Counties and states have been managing the pandemic and trying to keep our communities safe while managing the economic fallout as well.” Robertson continued, “State lines are not going to keep the economic fallout in one state or another, we’re all in this together.” Robertson’s outline of the legislation was sourced from the National Association of Counties, the New York State Association of Counties, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Dr. Jeff Matteson, TST BOCES Superintendent stated “Each school district is receiving a cut this year, regardless of the backfill from the CARES Act. With the expectation to reopen there’s

increased costs, that doesn't come from your regular school budget. If the additional funding doesn't come in to help support the state budget, the further the school year goes on the harder it's going to be to sustain reopening."

Deb Mohlenhoff, AVP for College Relations and Chief of Staff at Tompkins Cortland Community College stated, "We're planning for the unknown, We're not only planning for the potential impacts from the pandemic and keeping our faculty, students, and staff safe... we are in the midst of planning for a financial crisis. We see our institution as critical to the economic recovery of our community, we have options for training people who might be unemployed. Community colleges are crucial for cost-savings for families looking to send their children to college." Mohlenhoff continued, "Our counties have been very supportive and generous, and we've been in ongoing conversations with them. The problem is they're in the same financial hardship as we are if state aid is cut."

Human Services Coalition Executive Director Kathy Schlather stated, "Nonprofits have had to be clever and quick while at the same time not knowing what was going to happen to their funding. They're trying to plan for a future that they know will include an increase in the need for services." Schlather listed large agencies, domestic violence, housing, transportation, literacy, mental health, and child development services as being disproportionately impacted by cuts to state and local government funding.

Tavares added "Very early on people realized the impact of paused business activity, including understanding how sales tax revenue impacts everything else that we choose to do. In this next round we're advocating that we also need to help 501c(6) nonprofit organizations, including chambers of commerce, destination management organizations, and economic development organizations who support businesses – they've all been excluded from financial support through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)."

Jason Molino, Tompkins County Administrator thanked the Chamber for hosting the roundtable and their advocacy, stating "Our partners are critical to our community's success. We just heard how different industries are impacted, and how state and local aid means much more than just balancing our budget - it means supporting our community in many different and critical ways."

Stakeholders and members of the public were encouraged to advocate to federal representatives. Any Senator or Congressman can be reached at 202-224-3121. Reach the White House at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/>.

The archived stream can be viewed here <https://youtu.be/GBxr49VeOW0?t=27>

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## **About the Tompkins Chamber**

With over 700 active members, the Tompkins Chamber is dedicated to making our county a great place to live and work. We are a progressive, forward-thinking organization dedicated to promoting business in our region by being the community's nexus. The Tompkins Chamber works to forge links between and among business and government, community organizations, residents and institutions.

The mission of the Tompkins Chamber is to foster sustainable economic growth through service to our members, strategic advocacy, workforce development, destination marketing, and quality-of-life investments.