February 20, 2019

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

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As President of the American Planning Association’s (APA) New York Upstate Chapter, I thank you for your vision and leadership on programs and policies important to our members that improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers. I am writing to introduce myself and our organization and offer the broad expertise of our members to you and your staff throughout 2019 and beyond. Our organization is devoted to improving the nation’s communities and serving the public interest through good planning. We look forward to working with you to advance policy strategies for more just, healthy and prosperous communities for New Yorkers, but also to advance our legislative priorities on the federal level https://www.planning.org/policy/priorities/.

APA members are planners, elected and appointed local planning officials, educators, students, and engaged citizens who are committed to creating strong and vital communities. In all, APA is comprised of more than 40,000 members from across the United States. In New York State our chapter is 771 members strong. We are a diverse organization with members serving communities of all sizes and focused on a wide range of issues from housing to transportation to water infrastructure to parks, but we aspire to a common goal of creating open and vibrant communities of lasting value.

We believe in creating stronger and more just communities through access to opportunity, strategic investments in innovation, and broadly-shared prosperity. Your 3rd term and the convening of this new legislative session presents a historic opportunity to implement policies that promise to bring prosperity and opportunity for all. The following key policy issues that our chapter’s members are focused on and experts in.

**Housing and Homelessness**—Thank you for your tireless devotion to housing and homelessness over your career. The American Planning Association and its chapters applaud you for your leadership with continued investments in New York State’s comprehensive, five-year plan for affordable and homeless housing. We have launched the Planning Home initiative in order to take the next steps on this issue, reimagine ways to engage with communities, and reach solutions on housing and homelessness together. More information on Planning Home’s 6 principles that drive our action agenda on housing and homelessness can be found at https://planning.org/home.
Regional Economic Development – Your approach to regional economic development across New York State has resulted in the cooperation, collaboration, and regional resource prioritization necessary to meet the challenges of 21st century economic growth. We also applaud you for your continued work on urban reinvestment through support for the Downtown Revitalization Initiative. APA and its members focus on advancing policies that promote and support inclusive growth and development. We stand ready to work with you and local communities to implement thoughtful plans through meaningful community engagement to provide expanded access to opportunity to all.

Infrastructure – We commend you on your historic $100 billion investment in New York’s infrastructure and your announcement of a new $150 billion infrastructure plan over a five-year period starting in 2020. Now is the time for smart infrastructure investment. APA has adopted principles for new infrastructure and investment that work to benefit people and places across the country and in New York State. APA’s New York Upstate Chapter stands ready to work with you to ensure these needed investments meet the needs of New Yorkers and the challenges of the 21st century. These principles are available at https://planning.org/policy/principles/infrastructure.

Open Space and Parks – Your love for the Adirondacks and strong support for open space and parks is evident in the work of your administration to date. We commend you on your continued investment in the NY Parks 2020 initiative and approval of historic state land classifications for the Adirondack Park. On the national level, APA will continue our work with Congress to fully fund and permanently authorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in a way that ensures funding for state and local parks. Here in New York State, our members offer expertise in connecting community values to planning and programming for state and local open space and parks. Our Plan4Health initiative and Healthy Communities Policy Guide identify policies that community health and quality of life through planning for open space and parks. More information is available at https://planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/healthycommunities. In addition, our Great Urban Parks Campaign provides lessons learned on design and building, engagement, partnerships, and funding for park planning and development. More information can be found at https://planning.org/nationalcenters/green/urbanparks.

Protecting the Environment – Climate change presents you and our members with one of the most important planning challenges and opportunities for sound policy making and community building. Your proposal for a Green New Deal, another $2.5 billion in clean water infrastructure investment, and record high funding for the environmental protection fund continue your focus on environmental protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Through citizen engagement, plan making, development review, and other planning actions, planners promote fiscally sound investments and decisions that protect and restore the natural environment, conserve resources, and build more sustainable communities. Our policy guide on climate change provides a useful framework and key policies for addressing climate change on the state and local level. An overview and the full guide can be found at https://planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/climatechange.htm.

We look forward to working with you this year to as we seek to achieve a common goal of creating and maintaining great communities for all throughout New York State. Please contact me via markcastiglione1@gmail.com or our Director of Legislative Affairs, Darren Kempner at Darren.kempner@gmail.com with questions or for more information. We appreciate your strong leadership on planning issues and look forward to working with you on a successful and prosperous 2019.

Sincerely,

Mark A. Castiglione, AICP
President,
New York Upstate Chapter American Planning Association