

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

March 11, 2025

Vice Admiral Nancy Hann
Acting Under Secretary and Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Vice Admiral Hann:

I write to express my deep concern over layoffs and spending cuts at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Weather Service (NWS), and the potential severe impact they will have on New York's storm tracking ability. Reports indicate that NOAA has already terminated over 1,300 of its approximately 13,000-person workforce, and that more of these cuts are being considered, which has alarmed meteorologists, local governments, and residents in New York. Upstate New York communities uniquely rely on these lifesaving federal services for storm tracking and emergency preparedness whether it be for lake effect snowstorms, flooding, or even extreme wind storms and tornadoes as we saw devastated communities across the state last summer.

Already I am receiving reports the NWS in Albany will suspend weather balloon launches due to staffing shortages, the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory which conducts critical environmental research on Great Lakes ecosystems and contributes to more accurate modeling and prediction for the lakes and coastlines has now said it must take an "indefinite hiatus" from public communications. We need clear answers on the extent of these cuts in New York - as well as a concrete plan for ensuring the reestablishment of already terminated public services as soon as possible.

New York is home to 473 miles of Great Lakes coastline, and it provides drinking water for nearly three million New York residents. Over six million visitors flock to New York's Great Lakes corridor annually for fishing, boating, and other outdoor activities with fishing contributing about \$134 million per year to the state's economy and boating adding over \$600 million per year. GLRI and NOAA's other programs supporting the Great Lakes help keep this natural treasure healthy and beautiful to support the state's economy and these communities.

NOAA plays an integral role in supporting New York's Great Lakes fishing communities, farmers, and the general public. NOAA is a leading partner in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) which helps to clean up Great Lakes waters, prevent and control the spread of invasive species, address harmful algal blooms which are toxic to animals and humans, and conduct scientific research to inform models that help make Great Lakes communities more resilient to extreme weather. NOAA also helps Upstate farmers implement conservation practices that both reduce the environmental impact of their practices and save the farms money. NOAA Fisheries provides critical habitat restoration support to strengthen the coastal ecosystems and communities that make the Great Lakes such a popular destination for recreational opportunities. Additionally, New York Sea Grant Extension conducts research to inform better business decisions and public education on the Great Lakes at offices in Buffalo, Rochester, Newark, Oswego, and Watertown. These programs serve a

critical role in bolstering Upstate New York's businesses, recreation and tourism industries, and ecological health, and any reductions in staffing would harm New York's Great Lakes communities.

Beyond the Great Lakes, NOAA's NWS supports 24 stations in New York, including 21 stations Upstate, to provide New Yorkers advanced warnings of severe weather like lake effect snow that Western New York sees every winter, severe storms that flood communities, and even the 32 tornados that struck dozens of sites Upstate last summer. In 2024, New York experienced six storms that were so damaging they qualified for a federal disaster declaration. In December, 2022, Winter Storm Elliott affected the entire state of New York, bringing with it a range of hazards including strong winds with speeds of more than 60 mph, causing whiteout conditions, snow drifts over 12 feet, and extremely low wind chill temperatures. Areas around Lake Erie and Lake Ontario faced both coastal flooding and a lake effect snowstorm. This multi-faceted storm caused devastating consequences that resulted in the loss of over 50 lives. NWS warnings help people stay safe when storms like these strike and can even help save lives. Additionally, farmers rely on NWS data and forecasts to make informed decisions on when to plant, irrigate, and harvest their crops, and when to utilize various pest control measures. Access to NWS data helps farmer mitigate risk and maximize their yields. If New York NWS stations are not adequately staffed, New Yorkers will not have the reliable forecasts they need to stay safe during extreme weather events, farmers would lose access to a key resource they rely on to grow the food that feeds New York, and Great Lakes communities would have little warning to prepare their homes and businesses to weather the storm.

I am deeply concerned these continuing drastic cuts at NOAA will harm the emergency preparedness and safety of New York's communities that face extreme weather. The public will suffer if these public services are not re-established. Therefore, I request the following information by March 28, 2025:

1. The number of people fired at NOAA during your tenure as Acting Administrator who are based in New York and what jobs they performed.
2. Any staff or service reductions that have happened or will be taking place at any of New York's 24 National Weather Service Offices as a result of these cuts and where those will be.
3. The number of people fired at NOAA programs that serve the Great Lakes programs, and how this will impact services for the broader Great Lakes community in New York.
4. The number of people fired at NOAA programs that support grant programs serving New York fishermen and farmers.
5. The number of people fired at New York Sea Grant, if any, and the location of the offices they worked in.
6. Your plan to maintain and restore already suspended services.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator