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**Didi Barrett**

Assemblymember 106<sup>th</sup> District  
Columbia County  
Dutchess County

March 22, 2021

Kisha Santiago Martinez, Deputy Secretary of State  
New York State Department of State  
Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure  
One Commerce Plaza  
99 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12231

Dear Deputy Secretary Santiago Martinez:

I write today in support of the Columbia County Board of Supervisors, and several of the municipalities I represent, including Germantown, Hudson, and Hyde Park, which have each passed resolutions outlining their concerns and authorizing letters requesting your assistance with the ongoing and incremental loss of river access due to railroad practice and policies.

Specifically, they are requesting that the New York State Department of State (DOS) assist the municipalities between Poughkeepsie and Rensselaer to help coordinate their public access goals and improve river access while at the same time reducing the risk of danger along the Empire Corridor's Hudson Line. A regional shoreline access plan that identifies places where people use the river, places where new access is needed, and projects that would facilitate that access with the safety of our residents and visitors in mind is the best way to help achieve their collective river access goals.

Since January 2018, when Amtrak proposed gates and impasse fencing at eight locations in five municipalities between Rhinecliff and Stuyvesant, we have seen an outpouring from the public to engage in a more collaborative approach to balance the need for public shoreline access while reducing risk along the rail corridor. Public meetings held by Scenic Hudson between December 2018 and January 2020 fortified the fact that river access needs are extensive and varied.

While some of these municipalities have established Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs (LWRPs), some are in the midst of establishing programs and there are others that have no program. Likewise, river access varies from municipality to municipality. The greatest limiting factor to river access is the railroad's placement along the shoreline. Residents and tourists have enjoyed access to New York's coastal waters for water recreation for centuries. While there is limited parkland access to the Hudson River shoreline, many people access the foreshore by crossing the rail line, or by walking or driving along the access road.

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Fortunately, the DOS established a set of statewide coastal management policies, including policies that protect the public's right to river access along the State's coastline. We appreciate that the DOS required Amtrak to apply for a Coastal Consistency Determination for the plan for gates and fencing. Likewise, we applaud the NYS Departments of State and of Transportation for asking Amtrak to withdraw its application and in collaboration with municipal officials, develop a five-year plan that looks beyond the railroad's needs at the original eight locations.

Now, with Amtrak working on a Five Year Fencing Program on the Hudson Line Section of the Empire Corridor, these affected municipalities need your assistance to create a regional shoreline access plan that coordinates the various river access goals, identifies public access goals, identifies places for new public access, and ensures that existing shoreline access is protected in the future. Such a plan is needed to strike an appropriate balance of protecting existing river access, creating new access, and reducing risk along the corridor.

Whether enjoying recreational activities or admiring the stunning Hudson River viewsheds, residents and visitors alike have long cherished their river access. It is imperative that DOS and the Office of Planning, Development & Community Infrastructure work with these affected municipalities to ensure public access and the safety of our residents.

Thank you for your attention to this issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office.

Sincerely,



Didi Barrett  
Member of Assembly, 106th District

cc: Ray Lang, Senior Director National State Relations, Amtrak  
Matt Murell, Chairman, Columbia County Board of Supervisors  
Robert Beaury, Supervisor, Town of Germantown