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August 28, 2023

The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Governor Hochul,

It's been exactly one month since a lithium explosion at a solar facility in Chaumont caused a public safety emergency.

Because of the disaster in my district, and other battery meltdown incidents, you created an "Inter-Agency Fire Safety Working Group" to "ensure the safety and security of energy storage systems across the state." Your statement to the press was:

*"Following multiple fire safety incidents across New York, I've directed State agencies to immediately form the Inter-Agency Fire Safety Working Group to mobilize the personnel and resources necessary to keep New Yorkers safe," Governor Hochul said. "The Working Group will collaborate with first responders and local leaders to identify best practices, address potential risks to public safety, and ensure energy storage sites across New York are safe and effective."*

Given your strong rhetoric, I'm dismayed to hear from Chaumont Fire Chief, William Lipczynski that not one State agency has reached out to check in with the department and inquire about the health of its volunteers. There have been no inquiries on the symptoms they may be experiencing, no follow-ups on their health, no blood tests for phosphoryl fluoride poisoning or hydrogen fluoride exposure, not even a single thank you.

As you know, thermal runaway in a battery explosion produces deadly gasses that cannot be seen, smelled, or tasted. In Chaumont, the air testing equipment was completely ineffective.

I'm formally calling on you to immediately deploy the resources of the State Department of Health to do a full assessment of the emergency first responders who were on scene in Chaumont. I'm further calling on your office to develop human health assessment protocols following lithium battery explosions. Finally, I'd like a timeline (in writing) for the completion of the InterAgency Fire Safety Working Groups findings.

Sincerely,



Mark C. Walczyk  
Senator  
New York SD-49

MCW/tac