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ERIE COUNTY COMPTROLLER

KEVIN R. HARDWICK

June 10, 2025

Hon. John C. Garcia
Erie County Sheriff
10 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14202

Dear Sheriff Garcia:

I am writing to share my concern regarding the county's ability to pay for the purchase and upgrades for two new helicopters. Last year, the original plan approved by the Capital Projects Committee to buy one dual engine machine was altered to provide for the purchase of two single engine helicopters. Critical to the initial strategy was the hope for significant federal assistance. Now, it appears that the prospects for federal assistance have diminished.

My understanding is that the total cost of purchasing and outfitting the two new Airbus helicopters is roughly \$12.2 million. The County has already made a downpayment of \$1.4 million and we have Legislature approval to bond for an additional \$5.5 million. This would leave us approximately \$5.3 million short without some other source of funds. I believe that Airbus is allowing us to trade in our current helicopter, but without Federal assistance I do not know how we will have enough to pay for the full package.

Given that we have just paid \$250 million for our share of the new stadium and are talking about another \$430 million or so for a new correctional facility, I question the wisdom of committing additional County dollars at this time.

As the County's Chief Financial Officer, therefore, I would ask if you are aware of any pending aid from the Federal or State governments? If no such assistance is forthcoming, might we consider scaling back the plan to include a single new helicopter?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin R. Hardwick".

Kevin R. Hardwick, Ph.D.
Erie County Comptroller

cc: Erie County Legislature
Mark Poloncarz, Erie County Executive
Mark Cornell, Director of Budget and Management
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