

October 28, 2025

The Honorable Kathy Hochul

Governor of the State of New York
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

On behalf of the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society (NYG&B) and our constituents, I write to express our disappointment in the veto of S07782, legislation that would have required the New York State Department of Health (DOH) to enter into a contract for the digitalization and indexing of certain vital records. This legislation represented a constructive and much-needed step toward improving public access to historic New York vital records.

The millions of birth, marriage, and death records overseen by the DOH are essential building blocks for genealogists, historians, and anyone else researching their New York history. To ensure that people today and those of future generations can conduct meaningful research, it is imperative that these crucial historical documents are digitized and made accessible online.

At the same time, we appreciate your acknowledgment in your veto message to the New York State Senate of the significant burden of researching historic records—a burden which New Yorkers, genealogical and historical organizations, academic researchers, and the broader family history community consistently struggle with when trying to locate, obtain, and work with records that document our state's history. We are also grateful that you have directed the DOH to explore contracting with a capable vendor to digitize these records, improve accessibility, and streamline departmental processes.

As you advance that important directive, we respectfully request greater transparency regarding its implementation. For several years, the DOH/Bureau of Vital Records has not provided clear, public updates on its plans for digitization or engagement with qualified entities, despite repeated inquiries from the NYG&B and our constituency. To foster public trust and success, it is critical that this process be open, collaborative, and inclusive of stakeholders.

The NYG&B stands ready to assist the State in this effort. We maintain longstanding partnerships with nonprofit and commercial organizations that are willing to fully digitize

and index these vital records **at no cost to the State or its taxpayers**. With your support, we can help convene the right entities, advance the necessary conversations, and facilitate next steps that will preserve and protect these irreplaceable records while ensuring public access consistent with privacy laws and best practices.

We believe that—working together—we can still achieve the intent behind S07782 and deliver a modern, sustainable, and equitable vital record-access system for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your continued attention to this important matter. We welcome the opportunity to meet with your team or the DOH to discuss next steps at your earliest convenience. I have also submitted an electronic copy of this letter to your office through the official constituent policy inbox.

Sincerely,

D. Joshua Taylor

President & CEO

New York Genealogical and Biographical Society