The Honorable Kathleen Hochul

Governor of New York State

NYS Capitol Building

Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

The Tompkins County Environmental Management Council (EMC) is writing to express our strong support for the inquiries raised by the Tompkins County Water Resources Council (TC WRC) concerning the Cayuga salt mine operated by Cargill in Lansing, New York in the attached letter. We share the TC WRC's deep concerns about the Cayuga salt mine's future and its potential sale. The issues raised and questions posed by the TC WRC underscore the critical need for transparency, public involvement, and consistent environmental standards in mining operations across the state

The EMC was created under Article 47 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law passed in 1970. We play a pivotal role in advising the County Legislature on preserving, developing, and utilizing the county's natural resources while ensuring environmental quality. Our membership encompasses representatives from various municipalities, towns, villages, and the City of Ithaca, therefore, the EMC offers a diverse and representative perspective, reflecting a wide look at the environmental community’s interests and concerns.

The TC WRC's concerns are grounded in the principles of environmental protection, public involvement, and equitable regulation. We recognize that the preservation of water resources, environmental quality, and public health are required to be in balance with the economic needs of the State and community, however, often the scales are vastly unbalanced. As a council charged with advising the County Legislature on matters affecting these aspects, we fully endorse the TC WRC's efforts to seek answers to their questions and to ensure that the public's interests are protected.

The EMC is deeply concerned about the potential sale of Cargill's Cayuga salt mine in Lansing, New York. The imminent sale raises significant questions about the future operation of the mine and the associated environmental risks. It is the State’s responsibility to ensure that the new owner possesses the necessary knowledge, expertise, and resources to responsibly continue mining or address the mine's safe abandonment. The community is also apprehensive about the adequacy of the bond to cover environmental cleanup and the surface operations sites. To maintain public trust and safeguard the environment, it is essential to determine how the bond value is assessed and ensure it is sufficient before any ownership transfer. The State of NY and the taxpayers will be stuck holding the financial burden should mine collapse, lake contamination, land subsidence, or any environmental remediation by necessary more than the measly $3.5 M currently required.

Benchmark surveying has already found measurable subsidence in some locations above the dry-land extent of the mine. Salt pillars are not stone but slightly plastic, deforming slowly under pressure. It will always be the case that subsidence is not an *if* but a *when* outcome of room and pillar mining. The clean-up bond would need to take into account any infrastructure repairs and replacement from the ongoing subsidence damages.

In conclusion, the TC EMC stands in full support of the TC WRC's efforts to seek answers to these pressing questions. We share their commitment to environmental protection, public involvement, and equitable regulations. We kindly request your timely response to these inquiries, which will contribute to transparency and the protection of our valuable natural resources. Responses can be directed to dkiley@tompkins-co.org at the Tompkins County Planning Department.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. We appreciate your commitment to safeguarding our environment and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Cait Darfler

Chair, Tompkins County Environmental Management Council