November 5th, 2023

To: Tompkins County Legislature

From: Sustainable Finger Lakes, Board

Re: Sale of Cargill Salt Mine, Cayuga Lake, NY – Memorandum of Support

On behalf of Sustainable Finger Lakes (SFL), its Board & Staff, we stand in support of the resolution by Cayuga Lake Environmental Action Now (CLEAN) and 1,500 local residents that the Legislature of Tompkins County (in concert with NYS DEC and Governor Hochul) move to prevent the immediate sale of the salt mine beneath Cayuga Lake by out-of-state corporate giant Cargill, mine operator, largest privately owned company in America, until further, Cargill is tasked with a posted bond of ten billion dollars to ensure the safety, integrity and continued maintenance of the mine by future corporate permit lease holders. A formal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must follow as a prerequisite to any future sale. This mirrors the call by NYS Senator Lea Webb and Assembly Member Anna Kelles, who too have called for a comprehensive independent environmental review prior to any sale.

A bond of this size is entirely appropriate for a private company posting $177 billion in worldwide sales (2022), equal to companies like ExxonMobil, and AT&T. Besides, according to Forbes Magazine, the extended family who own Cargill includes 14 billionaires, more than any other family in the world, so such a bond is well within the capacity and corporate holdings of their conglomerate.

The entire lake stands at risk should any seismic leakage occur throughout the many extended miles of this subsurface salt mine, putting in jeopardy the environmental viability of the lake for centuries and the drinking water of 100,000 local residents. All attendant tourism would be adversely affected.

We therefore call on the Tompkins County Legislature, the DEC of NYS, Governor Hochul’s office and the Town Board of Lansing to do the right thing for the residents of upstate NY, its billion dollar tourist industry and the environmental health of our magnificent lake, and hold Cargill accountable to a posted bond, and their support for an EIS prior to sale.

Respectfully submitted,

SFL Board: Jessica Swindon (chair); Peter McDonald (treasurer); Neil Schill (secretary); Alex Andrasik; Dan Antonioli; Cathleen Banford; Roger Beck; Joel Rabinowitz; Gay Nicholson (ex officio, president).

 Cc: CLEAN staff

NYS DEC

 Office of NYS Governor Hochul