



We understand the speaking slots at tomorrow's public hearing in Rochester are taken, and so we submit the following for consideration:

November 16, 2007

Mr. Paul E. Francis
Director of the Budget and Senior Advisor to the Governor
New York State Division of Budget
State Capitol
Albany, NY 14224

RE: One-time special funding request from the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and Syracuse Symphony Orchestra

Dear Director Francis:

In 2001 the three orchestras of Western New York worked jointly to secure a special funding request from the State of New York. The request was designed to strengthen our ability to serve our communities by eliminating the outstanding accumulated debt of each orchestra. The request was very close to being approved when the events of 9/11 changed the budget landscape for the State.

Since then, each of our orchestras has worked extremely hard to achieve financial stability while serving more and more people. However, the fact is that 9/11, combined with the economic challenges of our region have not helped. Our combined debt, though once as high as \$10 million, now stands at \$4.5 million. Elimination of this debt will remove a major roadblock in the continued revitalization of our orchestras. More specifically, elimination of the debt will greatly enhance each orchestra's efforts to build their endowments to a level that will adequately capitalize their activities on a permanent basis.

With this in mind, we submitted a new request to the Governor in June for a grant of \$4.5 million to eliminate the accumulated debt of each orchestra mentioned above. It was our understanding at the time that the Assembly and Senate were prepared to put

\$1.5 million each of the total request into their respective budgets. We submit this request to you now with the hope of establishing it as part of the Executive Budget from the outset of the 2008 budget process.

In addition to addressing fiscal issues, our respective orchestras have continued to provide New York State residents with high quality symphonic music, comprehensive education and outreach programs, and a contribution to the economic development of the region. The following points outline the meaningful ways in which we contribute:

- 1) A combined economic impact of \$58.8 million to the Upstate economy.
- 2) Combined operating budgets of \$26 million of which 80% returns directly into our local economies.
- 3) Approximately 320 full-time employees (musicians, staff and management) that contribute to our local tax bases.
- 4) Collectively, we service a 40-county region touching more than one million residents annually through the live concert experience.
- 5) Education concerts and programs that reach more than 100,000 children from urban, rural and underserved areas, many at a reduced cost or free of charge.
- 6) In total, the three orchestras present approximately 400 full orchestral performances throughout the 40-county area.

The activities of our respective orchestras impact New York State in a meaningful and substantive way. Your fulfillment of this request will allow us to continue on track towards long-term financial health and artistic growth, ensuring our ability to provide a large geographic area with world-class entertainment and enrichment.

We thank you for your ongoing support of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and Syracuse Symphony Orchestra, and we look forward to working with you on this critical one-time funding request.

Sincerely,

Charles H. Owens
President & CEO
Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra