



NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE



March 28, 2023

Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York
Archdiocese of New York
1011 1st Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Cardinal Dolan:

We write to respectfully implore the Archdiocese to reconsider its position on the merger of St. Patrick's Church of Highland Mills and Sacred Heart of Monroe, which would effectively shutter St. Patrick's, leaving its future use and ownership in question and creating a substantial void in the spiritual and cultural lives of residents.

During Eileen Mulcahy's recent presentation to the parishioners of St. Patrick's on March 22, 2023, she attributed the need for this merger to the church's ongoing vocational crisis: a shortage of new priests, and an aging population of existing priests, have challenged individual parish's ability to sustain regular masses and services. While this is a reasonable concern, we firmly disagree with the Archdiocese' solution.

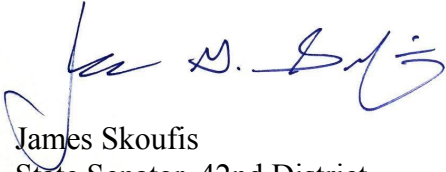
The congregation at St. Patrick's has remained strong. Despite dwindling numbers of parishioners at other parishes such as Maybrook, which closed its doors a few years ago, St. Patrick's has fully rebounded from COVID-era restrictions and regularly welcomes over 400 parishioners each weekend. To ask these 400-some residents, some of whom are elderly and have mobility concerns, to travel to Sunday mass at Sacred Heart—which, by the Archdiocese' own admission, is already overcrowded—is unreasonable. Ms. Mulcahy suggested that an additional mass be added at Sacred Heart to accommodate the influx of worshipers; if an additional service is needed, why not address this scheduling concern by sending a priest to St. Patrick's, instead of rerouting hundreds of parishioners?

Local traffic conditions, which will no doubt worsen should this merger proceed, pose significant safety concerns. Congregants would be required to either traverse the heavily-trafficked roads through Kiryas Joel, or the heavily-trafficked commercial corridor that passes by Woodbury Commons, causing long lines, stop-and-go conditions, and potential threats to pedestrian safety. The Archdiocese could avoid these concerns, and resulting complaints from parishioners, by allowing Sunday mass to remain at St. Patrick's and directing a priest there accordingly.

It is our understanding that a recent successful fundraising effort by trustees resulted in important upgrades to the church's interior and exterior amenities, and a dedicated group of volunteers continues to provide regular upkeep of the property. To close the doors of this holy space for regular use by parishioners and community members when the premises are in excellent repair appears unjustifiable. Countless children and families also rely on the programming offered at St. Patrick's, including specialized programs for children with disabilities and a popular youth basketball league, none of which seem to have been considered as part of the Archdiocese' calculation.

As one speaker noted during Wednesday's announcement, St. Patrick's *is* Woodbury. It is a treasured place to honor life, to memorialize death, and to celebrate love. To deprive this community of its spiritual heart is a grave mistake. If the fate of this holy place rests on the church's ability to recruit priests, and not on its ability to recruit parishioners, let us not punish the faithful. We respectfully ask your eminence to reverse course and pursue an alternative solution, one that allows Woodbury residents—both church-goers and non-Catholics alike—to remain connected to this cherished cornerstone of our community.

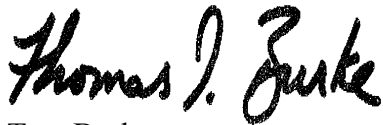
With gratitude,



James Skoufis
State Senator, 42nd District



Christopher Eachus
Assemblyman, 99th District



Tom Burke
Supervisor, Town of Woodbury



Andrew Giacomazza
Mayor, Village of Woodbury