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Memorandum of Support A.7045 (Buttenschon)/S.5959 (May)

The Preservation League of New York State is New York's statewide historic preservation nonprofit. We write in support of Bills A.7045/S.5959 relating to the meetings of the Canal Recreationway Commission.

As New York State's only statewide historic preservation nonprofit organization, the Preservation League invests in people and projects that champion the essential role of preservation in community revitalization, sustainable economic growth and the protection of our historic buildings and landscapes. We lead advocacy, economic development and education programs across the state and partner with local preservation organizations throughout New York. In 2019, we listed the NYS Canal System as a statewide *Seven to Save* to highlight the need for New York State to prioritize stewardship of its National Historic Landmark canals as an intact, fully-navigable international waterway for present and future generations.

The Canal Recreationway Commission was founded in 1992 upon the creation of the New York State Canal Corporation. Its members include individuals involved in canal use, development, preservation, enhancement, and local governments from counties adjacent to or intersected by the Canal System. Following its creation, the Commission prepared and adopted the *Canal Recreationway Plan* in 1995. This plan focused on four primary elements: Canal Harbors, Canal Service Port and Lock Projects, the Canalway Trail, and a Canal System Marketing Plan.

Successful completion of the 1995 *Canal Recreationway Plan*, which laid the groundwork for our recently completed and hugely successful Empire State Trail, while celebrating the canal system as an operating waterway, provided a roadmap for the Canal System to transform from a predominantly commercial waterway to the vibrant, popular, scenic, economically viable, multifaceted resource we know today. The Canal Harbors and Service Ports created as a result of the 1995 plan created economic activity throughout the corridor, particularly in the cities of Schenectady, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo.

We believe the three fundamental goals of the Canal Recreationway Commission, preserving the best of the past, enhancing recreational opportunities, fostering appropriate and sustainable economic development, mirror those of the *Reimagine the Canals* effort and support the work of the NYS Canal Corporation today.

The Canal Recreationway Commission currently meets subject to the call of the chairperson. By setting a regular quarterly meeting schedule, this bill will establish consistency and give the Commission the tools to focus on important future planning efforts to support our Canal System and chart a new path forward, supporting our National Historic Landmark Canal System's ability to leverage the economic benefits of tourism, recreation, and commercial use now and into the future.