



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
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APRIL 2021 UPDATE TO COMMUNITY BOARD 6

State Budget Update

Late last night, the State Legislature passed a \$212 billion State Budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022. This is the ninth State Budget I've voted on since becoming a State Senator, and it's by far the most important of my career.

Just a few short months ago, the Executive Budget proposed devastating cuts to public schools, health care and higher education. In response, the Legislature avoided austerity and instead crafted a State Budget that will help New Yorkers recover from the pandemic. Below are some highlights.

Success! Funding Public Schools (finally)

- Rejects over \$2 billion worth of the Governor's proposed cuts to public schools and SUNY and CUNY.
- Provides the largest-ever State-funded school aid increase of \$3.1 billion, including a \$1.4 billion Foundation Aid increase.
- Provides a three-year phase-in of Foundation Aid, at long last fulfilling the requirements of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit that determined all children in New York were entitled to a "sound, basic education." New York City schools and districts across the state will receive the full amount of Foundation Aid they are owed by the 2023-2024 school year.
- Increases the TAP award for college students by \$500, bringing the maximum award up to \$5,665.

Fighting for Struggling Tenants

- Establishes a \$2.43 billion COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program to provide up to 12 months of rent and utility arrears relief for tenants with household incomes of up to 120% of area median income.
- Dedicates \$600 million toward the Homeownership Relief and Protection Program.
- \$200 million in new capital funding for NYCHA.

Local Priorities Get Funded

- \$2.1 billion for a first-in-the-nation Excluded Workers Fund to provide benefits to workers who lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic but were ineligible for Unemployment Insurance.
- \$500,000 in additional funding for Runaway & Homeless Youth, for a total of \$5 million.
- \$1 million in additional funding for the Nurse-Family Partnership Program.
- Restores \$325,000 in proposed cuts and included an additional \$675,000 for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) like Penn South.

- \$25 million in additional funding for the Securing Communities Against Hate Crime Program.

Over \$1 Billion for Small Businesses & the Arts

- For months I've worked with the Save Our Storefronts coalition to deliver relief to small businesses. This budget creates an \$800 million Small Business Recovery Grant Program to assist small businesses affected by lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Establishes a \$100 million NYC Musical & Theatrical Production tax credit similar to legislation I introduced to help restart Broadway and off-Broadway productions. I'll continue to work with unions representing this industry to ensure that the productions benefitting from this tax credit honor Collective Bargaining Agreements.
- Provides a \$40 million for the Arts & Cultural Organization Recovery Grant Program to help the non-profit arts sector in New York State recover from effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Creates a \$25 million Restaurant Resiliency Grant Program and provides \$35 million for a Restaurant Return-to-Work tax credit.

Healthcare & the Climate Crisis

- Proposes a \$3 billion "Restore Mother Nature" Environmental Bond Act, which will be subject to public approval on the November 2022 general election ballot, to fund projects related to restoration and flood risk reduction, climate change mitigation, and water quality improvement.
- Provides for an early retirement incentive for public employees in the City of New York.
- Reforms for-profit nursing homes by requiring them to spend 70% of their revenue on direct resident care, 40% of which must go toward direct resident staffing costs.
- Requires broadband service providers to offer broadband service with speeds of at least 25 Mbps at a discounted rate of \$15 per month for SNAP-eligible households.
- Eliminates monthly premiums for New Yorkers enrolled in the Family Health Plus Program with a household income at or below 200% of the federal poverty line, including for dental and vision care.
- Rejects the Governor's proposal to issue licenses for a casino that could end up in Manhattan.
- Rejects the Governor's proposal to transition the 340B Medicaid pharmacy benefit from managed care plans to fee-for-service, which would have financially devastated safety net hospitals and Community Health Centers like Callen-Lorde and Ryan Chelsea-Clinton.
- Rejects the Governor's \$160 million diversion of funds to support transportation systems like the MTA.

We Need Local Decision-Making

Unfortunately, the State Budget includes funding for the Empire Station Complex development project, a massive real estate development consisting of up to 10 supertall commercial office buildings. I voted against the Capital Projects appropriations bill because this plan is proceeding without sufficient community input and local decision-

making. You can watch my remarks explaining my vote here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUeIdzUYtqI>



You can find full details of the budget [here](#) later today. My office will be sharing more information about the various rental assistance programs, small business and arts grants, and other benefits and programs authorized in this State Budget.

Statement on Anti-Asian-American Violence

I am deeply disturbed and saddened by the attacks that resulted in eight lives lost in Atlanta on Tuesday. This rise in hate crimes against Asian-Americans has become a growing issue across the United States, and it must stop. The attacks are once again a signal of the rise of domestic terrorism in this country. This violence is unacceptable, we must combat hate whenever we see it rear its ugly head. The only way for our nation to live up to its highest ideals is to dismantle every institution which props up white supremacy.

A blue event poster for a Facebook Live town hall. At the top, it reads "STATE SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN & ASSEMBLYMEMBER LINDA B. ROSENTHAL PRESENT:" flanked by the New York State and New York City seals. The main title is "Q&A WITH THE NATION'S TOP VACCINE EXPERT" in large white letters. Below the title are three portrait photos: Linda B. Rosenthal, Dr. Peter Marks, and Brad Hoylman. At the bottom, it says "A Facebook Live town hall with: DR. PETER MARKS" in large white letters, followed by "FDA Leader Overseeing Vaccines & Director of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER)" in smaller white text. At the very bottom, it says "f LIVE • SUNDAY, APRIL 18 AT 6 PM" with a Facebook Live icon.

Join Me: A Night with Dr. Marks

Join me and Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal at 6pm on Sunday, April 18 for a conversation with Dr. Peter Marks, the nation's leading expert on vaccines. As the City, State, and federal government ramp up distribution of three different vaccines, there are understandably many outstanding questions. Get those answered and more information directly from the doctor in charge. You can join the event here at 6pm on Sunday, April 18: <https://www.facebook.com/bradhoylman/>

Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act

On March 30th, the Senate passed legislation I've co-sponsored since 2013, the Marijuana Regulation & Taxation Act (MRTA), which will establish a new office for the regulation of cannabis and decriminalize the recreational use of adult-use marijuana. The MRTA is the most progressive marijuana legalization legislation in the country, creating a framework for a new regulated industry that will prevent large companies from dominating the marketplace. To ensure that the business opportunities created by this legislation will benefit communities that have historically borne the brunt of marijuana criminalization, license applicants impacted by the war on drugs, who are low-income, or who have a prior marijuana-related conviction will be prioritized. I am grateful for the hard work and vision of my colleague Sen. Liz Krueger, who has championed this legislation for years, and for Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for her leadership in getting this bill across the finish line.

Small Business Panel

On March 30th, I co-sponsored a panel on small businesses in a post-pandemic Manhattan. CB6 Chair, Kyle Athayde, led the discussion with panelists MBP Gale Brewer, Jessica Walker (Manhattan Chamber of Commerce), Brian Owens (Restaurant Row East Alliance), Peter Walsh (Coogan's Restaurant), Peter Arndsten (Columbus-Amsterdam BID), Jessica Lappin (Downtown Alliance), Rose Pierre-Louis (The McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research at NYU), and Sharon Hershkowitz (Balloon Saloon).

Standing with Our nurses

On March 16th, I joined NYSNA to reaffirm my commitment to passing the Safe Staffing for Quality Care Act in the Senate. As we all know, this pandemic has laid bare what nurses have been shouting from the rooftops for years: safe staffing levels are critical for the health of patients and staff. This legislation would heed those calls to mandate safe staffing levels and help keep our community healthy during this pandemic and beyond.

T.A.P. Funding

Also on March 16th, I joined "Turn on the TAP" advocates to rally in support of restoring TAP eligibility to incarcerated New Yorkers. We know that providing opportunities for higher education empowers incarcerated individuals and in doing so significantly lowers the recidivism rate, makes prisons safer, increases their rate of employment, and strengthens our communities. Not only that but, studies show that every dollar spent on college in prison programs saves the state nearly \$5 in incarceration costs. If we open TAP to incarcerated individuals, the state would be poised to save nearly \$30 million a year. Expanding TAP eligibility to our incarcerated neighbors is not only the moral and just thing to do, it is the fiscally responsible thing to do. I stand with Turn on the TAP NY in asking our state to restore TAP funding so we can create a better life for those currently behind bars and disrupt the cycle of incarceration.



I have launched a COVID-19 Vaccine Appointment Help Center because I've heard from so many of you about how difficult it is to get an appointment for a vaccine. If you live in my district, you can sign up using this form: <https://bit.ly/HoylmanHelpCenter>

Please fill out the information on this form completely so we can help determine your eligibility, which will enable us to try to schedule an appointment for you. As appointments go very quickly, we urge you to continue to try to make your own appointment, too. We cannot guarantee an appointment because scheduling availability is subject to vaccine supply and other factors outside of our control. We also cannot guarantee that any appointments we schedule will be in your immediate neighborhood. Therefore, transportation may be required within the five boroughs. If we are successful in securing an appointment for you, we will contact you to let you know.

Recent Bill Passage

During budget negotiations, two important pieces of legislation I sponsor came to the Senate floor and were passed:

- On Wednesday March 24th, the Senate unanimously passed my bill ([S.1957-A](#)) to create universal access to veterans treatment courts in New York. Veterans treatment courts, which originated in Buffalo in 2008, provide veteran-defendants suffering from addiction or mental illness with links to specialized services as a diversion from the traditional criminal justice system and have proven to lower recidivism rates. This important bill, which has the support of New York State Health Foundation, will ensure that qualifying veterans in every county in the state would have an opportunity to have their cases diverted from traditional criminal prosecution into the more specialized treatment path accorded by a veterans treatment court after arrest.
- On Thursday March 25th, the Senate passed legislation I sponsor ([S.355](#)) to prohibit fluids generated from hydrofracking or other oil and gas drilling from being spread on roads. Currently, these toxic and carcinogenic chemicals are used by dozens of cities, towns and private agencies across New York State as dust inhibiting or de-icing agents, despite the fact that they can seep into groundwater and contaminate nearby bodies of water. This bill was supported by NYPIRG, Riverkeeper, Food & Water Watch,

Environmental Advocates NY, Castkill Mountainkeeper and Grassroots Environmental Education.

Voluntary COVID-19 Health Registry:

On March 23rd, I introduced new legislation with 22 of my Senate colleagues to establish the New York State COVID-19 Health Registry ([S.5927](#)). The voluntary registry that my bill establishes would provide baseline health data to allow researchers and health professions the ability to track and investigate the condition of “long-haul” COVID-19, as well as other physical and mental health impacts of the disease. It’s estimated that more than 10% of COVID-19 infections could develop into “Long COVID,” including lingering respiratory problems, difficulty concentrating and potentially long-term disabilities. The registry created by my bill will assist New York in developing strategies to help COVID-19 survivors cope with this syndrome and understand the scope of this growing public health concern. The COVID-19 Health Registry is modeled after the World Trade Center Health Registry used to monitor the health of people directly exposed to the 9/11 World Trade Center disaster. You can read a Daily News article about my new bill, which is being supported by the New York AFL-CIO [here](#).

Opposition to East River Park Demolition

On March 23rd, I joined my colleagues, Senator Brian Kavanagh and Assemblymember Harvey Epstein in sending a letter to the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to request that they preserve the East River Park’s Track House and Tennis Center Comfort Station, currently slated for demolition as part of the East Side Coastal Resiliency (ESCR) project. Although the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation determined that the buildings are eligible for the National and State Registers of Historic Places, the NYC Office of Management and Budget, in consultation with them, determined that mitigation for these architectural resources consist only of photographic documentation before demolition. This plan would constitute a serious loss for the Lower East Side community. These structures are too architecturally, historically and culturally important to lose. You can read the letter [here](#).

FOIL Appeal

I appealed the response I received to my February 1st FOIL request to the NYC Department of Design and Construction (DDC) for a report resulting from the value engineering study that led to the transformation in the ESCR project design. I filed the FOIL application only after my October 22, 2020 letter to DDC went unanswered despite numerous attempts by my office to follow up. In response to my FOIL request, I was directed to a preliminary report that was heavily redacted. These redactions appear to obscure entire pages discussing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative design concepts for the ESCR Project. In my appeal to this response, I requested an unredacted version of the report. This lack of transparency denies access to discourse and reasoning surrounding the 2018 design change.

COVID-19 Vaccine Updates:

All New Yorkers age 16+ are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. New York City has now started offering walk-up vaccinations for residents 75+ at 25 sites within the city. This puts us in line with CDC guidance.

New York City and New York State each have their own vaccination sites and ways to schedule your vaccine.

I am thankful that now as the rollout of the vaccine has moved forward, we are now possibly looking to return somewhat to normal soon. As frustrated as you are about how confusing this all is, and I'm committed to helping improve the vaccination sign-up process however I can, but for now I hope this information offers some clarity.

Scheduling a Vaccine through New York City

[Head here](#) to find NYC vaccination locations. Plug in your zip code and you can find locations near you. If you are currently eligible, you can schedule appointments directly with vaccine providers, either by email or phone.

To schedule an appointment by phone please call 877-VAX-4NYC or 877-829-4692. If you need technical assistance or are receiving an error when using the COVID-19 Vaccine Hubs portal, please call 800-831-8196.

The New York City "[Vaccine Command Center](#)" can answer other questions and provide you with additional information like vaccination rates.

Scheduling a Vaccine through New York State

Here is state guidance on how to sign up for a vaccine.

- Health care workers who are part of Phase 1a will continue to be vaccinated at hospitals and other clinical settings.
- People age 65 and over or immunocompromised will primarily be vaccinated at pharmacies and other sites that are part of the "retail network." If you are eligible please [fill this out](#) and then you will be able to schedule a vaccination using the same site. If you have any questions on how to use the form and website, please use this [resource page](#). Additionally, the COVID-19 Vaccination Hotline is open 7AM - 10PM, 7 days a week, for scheduling vaccination appointments for eligible New Yorkers: 1-833-NYS-4-VAX (1-833-697-4829).
- Public employees (for example, police departments, public school teachers and MTA employees) will primarily be vaccinated through their employers' relevant health programs or as organized by their unions.

If you are interested in scheduling a vaccine at the Javits Center can do so through [heading here](#) or calling 888-364-3065. *Disclaimer: this page has crashed with an influx of interest and may crash again.*

COVID-19 Testing

COVID-19 positivity rates are increasing across the city. Please get tested and help keep the rate of spread down. I'd suggest going to NYC Health & Hospitals sites. They typically have shorter lines, results come in 48-72 hours, and it's FREE whether or not you have insurance. You can find NYC's sites here: <https://www.nychealthandhospitals.org/covid-19-testing-sites/>. I also strongly recommend getting the COVID-19 Alert NY app to receive exposure alerts: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-alert-ny>.

Free Tax Prep

If you earned \$68,000 or less in 2020, learn how you can file for free – including from home – with the help of an IRS certified VITA/TCE volunteer preparer. Preparers can help you file your taxes safely now and transmit the returns to the IRS when they open the tax season on Friday, February 12, 2021. Please note that any preparer promising a tax refund BEFORE February 12 may be selling you a Refund Anticipation Loan (RAL), which may come with fees and high interest rates.

Services are available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, and Russian. Additional languages are available through phone interpretation.

Learn more at nyc.gov/taxprep or call 311 and ask for tax preparation assistance.

Mental Health Resources & Hotlines

Between the isolation and loneliness of social distancing and the stress and anxiety of worrying about our health, mental health care is more important than ever. I want to share some free resources you can use to get help if you need it:

- New York State Office of Mental Health (NYS OMH): In response to increased need for mental health care, NYS OMH has created a hotline with free mental health counseling. Call 1-844-863-9314 to speak to someone.
- NYC Well: This city-operated hotline offers free, confidential mental health counseling 24/7. You can call 1-888-NYC-WELL, text "WELL" to 65173 or visit their website to chat with a professional.
- Disaster Distress Helpline (DDH): This free helpline provides crisis counseling and support for anyone experiencing distress or behavioral health concerns related to public health emergencies and other natural disasters. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text "TalkWithUs" to 66746
- Crisis Text Line: This service provides free trained crisis counselors who can listen and respond through text messages. They operate 24/7. Text "MHA" to 741741 to get in touch.
- The Trevor Project: This nonprofit organization, based in our district, operates a national 24-hour toll free confidential suicide hotline for LGBTQ youth. To reach the hotline, call 1-866-488-7386 or text "START" to 678678.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: Practicing social isolation can be extraordinarily difficult for those living with abusive intimate partners. Call 1-800-799-7233, log onto www.thehotline.org or text "LOVEIS" to 22522 to speak with someone.
- Caregiver Help Desk: Caring for a loved one can present new challenges given the current restrictions on outdoor activity and high risks for senior citizens. Between 8:00 AM and 7:00 PM, you can call this hotline where caregiving experts can provide the information you need to navigate complex caregiving challenges. Call 855-227-3640 to speak with a caregiving expert.

If you have any ideas, questions, or concerns, you can always contact me or Sam Vasquez at **212-633-8052** or via e-mail at svasquez@nysenate.gov

You can email me at hoylman@nysenate.gov or visit my website at hoylman.nysenate.gov to find copies of my letters, testimonies, and press releases.