



Dear Neighbor,

The Legislature has been back in session for less than a month, and there's already a lot to report. This email offers some updates from Albany and City Hall, as well as a few important events and health updates.

Stay safe and healthy. As always, if you have any questions or need assistance, please email or call my office at lkruieger@nysenate.gov or 212-490-9535.

Best,

Liz Krueger
State Senator

Legislature Passes Equal Rights Amendment



On Tuesday, January 24th, the State Senate and Assembly passed for the second time a proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the State Constitution. The amendment, [S.108/A.1283](#), which I sponsored with Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright, will extend current constitutional protections against discrimination to several new protected classes, as well as protecting access to contraception and abortion.

The New York State Constitution's Equal Protection Clause already prohibits discrimination based on race, color, creed, and religion. The Equal Rights Amendment will add new anti-discrimination protections to the Constitution, including explicit guarantees for reproductive rights and marriage equality. The

amendment adds new protected classes, specifically prohibiting discrimination on account of a person's age, disability, ethnicity, national origin, or sex including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, pregnancy outcomes, and reproductive healthcare choices. The Legislature first passed the measure in June 2022 after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade. Following last month's second passage, the amendment will now go to voters for ratification in the November 2024 general election.

Days after what would have been the 50th anniversary of Roe, we affirmed yet again that we will not allow New Yorkers to be pulled backward, we will not allow the progress we have made on reproductive freedom to be undone. Women have waited far too long to be included in our State Constitution, but so have LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, Latinos, and everyone who has faced discrimination based on characteristics that are beyond their control. The 1930s-era equal rights language in our State Constitution is long overdue for an update to ensure that equal rights are for everyone. I am proud that we will send this amendment to the people.

[Click Here to Watch My Comments on the ERA Passage](#)

Hearing On The Climate Action Council's Final Scoping Plan



On January 19th, The Senate Committee on Finance, which I chair, as well as the committees on Environmental Conservation and Energy and Telecommunications, held a hearing to examine the legislative and budgetary actions necessary to implement the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and the Climate Action Council Final Scoping Plan.

Pursuant to the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) passed in 2019, in December the New York State Climate Action Council released their Final

Scoping Plan. The Scoping Plan serves as the framework for how the State will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve net-zero emissions, increase renewable energy usage, and ensure climate justice, in line with the mandates of the CLCPA. The Plan affects all sectors of the State's economy and society, and as such will have significant budgetary and legislative implications.

This is the year when the rubber meets the road on climate action in New York. We must act quickly, through the budget and through the regular legislative process, to begin to implement the recommendations of the Final Scoping Plan. Not only do we need to move quickly, but we also have to get it right, and that is why we reached out to all stakeholders in a process that will continue through the budget hearings. The climate emergency is here, and what we do in Albany this year will have a lasting impact on New Yorkers today and well into the future.

[Click Here for Video of the Hearing, as well as Written Testimony](#)

Testimony Before NYC Council On The Proliferation Of Unlicensed Smoke Shops

On January 18th, I testified before the New York City Council Committees on Oversight & Investigation, Health, and Consumer & Worker Protection regarding the proliferation of unlicensed smoke shops in New York City.

[Click Here to Read My Testimony](#)

Executive Budget Proposal And Budget Hearings



On Wednesday, February 1st, Governor Kathy Hochul released her FY 2024

Executive Budget proposal. Passing the budget is the most impactful action we take during any legislative session, as it touches the daily lives of everyone in our state. This year's Executive Budget includes significant proposals on housing, education, public safety, climate, and many more issues.

You can find all the information on the Executive Budget on the Governor's website, including video of her presentation and links to the actual budget legislation on the Division of Budget website.

[Click Here for More Information on the Executive Budget Proposal](#)

During the rest of this month, as Chair of Senate Finance Committee, I will be holding joint hearings with my Assembly counterpart on all aspects of the budget. You can find more details about the budget hearing schedule, including how you can view the livestream of each hearing, at the Senate website.

[Click Here for More Information on the Budget Hearings](#)

My Op-Ed In The Daily News On The Equality Model



This week the New York Daily News published an op-ed that I co-authored with two other state legislators from the Northeast, Representative Mary S. Keefe of Massachusetts and Representative Lois Galgay Reckitt of Maine. In the piece, we argue that a new model is needed to address the regional issue of sex trafficking. We support something called the Equality Model, also known as the Nordic Model, in which people in prostitution are no longer criminalized, while those who exploit them - sex buyers, pimps, and brothel owners - are held accountable for the harm they cause.

I believe it is the job of government to stand up for vulnerable and marginalized people against the systems of exploitation that seek to hurt and take advantage of them. That's why I support the Equality Model, and that's why I have re-introduced the Sex Trade Survivors Justice and Equality Act in Albany.

[Click Here to Read the Op-Ed](#)

Proposed Link 5G Expansion on the Upper East Side

In November, the Mayor's Office of Technology and Innovation (OTI) announced their plan for a new program to expand the city's 5G infrastructure, called "Link 5G". This program is an extension of the existing LinkNYC kiosk program, though I have heard some concerns from several constituents that the new towers, which are 32 feet tall, are out of context with residential neighborhoods and historic districts.

In January, I signed on to a letter along with Council Member Keith Powers and other East Side elected officials to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, urging the Commission to consider whether there are not more appropriate sites or designs for implementing this technology.

[Click Here to Read our Letter to LPC](#)

My Virtual Roundtable for Boomers and Seniors

Session II: "Stay Put for the Long Term: The Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption Program"

Thursday, February 9th 10 am – 11:30 am

Senator Krueger's 2023 five-part Senior Roundtable Series focuses on housing for older people. Access to safe affordable housing is critical to ensure that we are able to age well in the community.

On Thursday, February 9th we will share information about the Senior Citizens Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) Program.

If you--

- Live in a rent regulated apartment;
- Are at least 62 years of age;
- Have an annual income of \$50,000 or less;
- Pay at least one third of your income on rent; and
- Want your current rent to remain the same for as long as you stay in your apartment?

If the answer is yes to all of the above, and you do not already receive SCRIE, you should attend this virtual roundtable to learn more about accessing the program. SCRIE helps older adults be able to afford to stay in their homes.

If you already receive SCRIE and have questions, hear answers from the experts about the program.

The February 9th Roundtable will feature:

- Kim Lerner, Director, Benefits Outreach Program, LiveOn NY
- Inie Park, Ombudsperson, Office of the Taxpayer Advocate, NYC Department of Finance

You will have the option of **joining the event online through Zoom**, a webinar hosting service.

You will also have the option to **view the event online through Facebook**. Please note that **you do not need a Facebook account or profile** to view the event through Facebook.

If you do not have access to a computer, tablet, or other electronic device, **you can listen in by telephone**.

****If you register for an event, a confirmation email with the Zoom link and the call-in information will be sent at least a week in advance of the event.****

The event will feature a **question and answer session** with Kim Lerner and Inie Park. If you want information, or have questions about how to apply for SCRIE, who is eligible, and the program's asset and income requirements, join us at the February 9th Senior Roundtable. If you already are a SCRIE recipient but have questions about the program, you should attend as well. Attendees will be able to submit questions through Zoom and Facebook during the event but are **strongly** encouraged to submit them in advance.

Please let us know if you plan to attend the Thursday, February 9th Virtual Senior Roundtable and RSVP to <https://tinyurl.com/2-9-23-Senior-Roundtable>.

[Click Here to RSVP for the February 9th Roundtable](#)

Evening of Unity to Stand Against Anti-Semitism

Evening of **UNITY**

at The Moise Safra Center

Monday, February 13th at 6:30 PM

In light of recent antisemitic attacks and vandalism throughout the Upper East Side, the Moise Safra Center, in association with State Senator Liz Krueger, Congressman Jerry Nadler, Council Member Julie Menin, Council Member Keith Powers, and the NYPD 19th Precinct, is honored to present an “Evening of **Unity**”

Join us as we gather together to stand united against antisemitism and show that there is no place for any type of hate in New York City.



RSVP Online www.moisesafracenter.org
130 East 82nd Street New York, NY 10028

[Click Here to RSVP for the Evening of Unity](#)

NYS Electric and Gas Bill Relief Program, Phase II

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR ENERGY DEBT RELIEF IN 2023?

**YOU WILL
GET AN
ENERGY BILL
CREDIT IF...**

**ONLY RESIDENTIAL AND
SMALL BUSINESS
CUSTOMERS WHO DID NOT
RECEIVE A BILL RELIEF
CREDIT IN 2022 ARE ELIGIBLE
FOR DEBT RELIEF IN 2023!**

NOTE: Residential customers will not have their service suspended for non-payment while these Bill Relief Program credits are being processed (before March 1, 2023)!

YOU DID NOT RECEIVE A BILL RELIEF CREDIT IN 2022

Identified low-income customers who received a bill relief credit last year are **not** eligible for additional relief in 2023.

YOU DID NOT RECEIVE ERAP OR RAS IN 2022

Customers who received the **Emergency Rental Assistance Program** or **Regular Arrears Supplement** should have also already received a bill relief credit and are ineligible for additional relief.

YOU HAVE DEBT THAT ACCRUED BEFORE MAY 1, 2022

Only debt that accrued before May 1, 2022 will be addressed by bill relief in 2023! Any debt from after May 1, 2022 will remain on the account even after bill relief is applied.

PUBLIC UTILITY LAW PROJECT OF NEW YORK (JAN 2023)

Earlier this month, Governor Hochul announced a \$672 million program (Phase II) to pay off unaffordable, past-due utility bills for 478,000 residential households and 56,000 small businesses. This program builds off of the State's Electric and Gas Bill Relief Program (Phase I) which relieved identified low-income customers who were enrolled in their utility's monthly bill discount program through December 31, 2022. Phase II credits will begin to hit customer accounts within 90 days and no application or self-attestation is necessary.

Who is eligible?

- Residential customers who did not receive Phase I relief with gas and electric arrears that accrued before May 1, 2022;
- Small commercial customers with gas and electric arrears that accrued before May 1, 2022;
- Some customers that were terminated for non-payment during 2022 are also eligible, although they should contact their utility to confirm eligibility.

Who is ineligible?

- Identified low-income customers that received relief under Phase I;
- Residential and small commercial customers with unpaid balances that accrued after May 1, 2022;

- Municipal electric or gas utility customers.

How much will customers receive?

- Credit amounts are capped by utility and service class, see chart for reference below;
- Credits will equal the customer's actual arrears up to the limit;
- If a customer owes more than the cap, they will still be responsible for whatever is leftover, including bills unpaid after May 1, 2022.

Am I protected from shutoffs while credits are rolled out?

- YES! During implementation (at least through March 1, 2023, or 30 days after credits have been applied, whichever is later), terminations of service for non-payment will not occur.

If you have any questions, call the Public Utility Law Project hotline at (877) 669-2572 or email us at info@utilityproject.org.

The Public Health Emergency Will End on May 11, 2023

On January 20th, President Biden announced that the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (PHE) will end on May 11th of this year. Although the pandemic still exists, we have proven safety measures that help to manage community transmission of the Coronavirus, as well as life-saving vaccines and treatment.

Many policies that have been established over the past three years to help fight the virus will expire once the PHE comes to an end. Some of these policies include free community testing, vaccinations, and treatment, as well as access to free rapid tests for use at home. In addition, Medicare beneficiaries and individuals with commercial insurance have been able to get a supply of 8 free rapid tests per month from their local pharmacies. At some point in the future, it will be necessary for individuals to pay out-of-pocket or use insurance to get vaccinated.

Please click on the following articles for additional details about the implications of the PHE ending. I encourage you to start preparing by stocking up on free at-home rapid tests and getting up to date with Coronavirus vaccinations.

- [These benefits will disappear when Biden ends the Covid national and public health emergencies in May \(CNN\)](#)
- [What Happens When COVID-19 Emergency Declarations End? Implications for Coverage, Costs, and Access \(Kaiser Family Foundation\)](#)

Important Changes Coming to New York Medicaid, Child Health Plus and the Essential Plan

Do you or a family member currently have health insurance through New York State Medicaid, Child Health Plus or the Essential Plan? The Medicaid continuous enrollment condition will end on March 31, 2023 and New York State will resume

eligibility reviews and renewals for people enrolled in these programs. This means you may need to take action to renew your health insurance or the insurance of your family members. Please visit this web page to view updates as new information becomes available, including when the COVID-19 public health emergency will end.

[Frequently Asked Questions for New Yorkers enrolled through NY State of Health](#)
[Frequently Asked Questions for New Yorkers enrolled through their Local Department of Social Services or the New York City Human Resources Administration](#)

Here are some things you can do now to get ready:

- **Sign up to receive SMS/MMS Text alerts** from NY State of Health so you don't miss important health insurance updates, including when it's time to renew your coverage.

To subscribe, text START to 1-866-988-0327

Learn more:

- [SMS/MMS Text Messaging Privacy Policy](#)
- [SMS/MMS Text Messaging Consent and Terms of Service](#)
- **Make sure your address and contact information is up to date.** Make sure NY State of Health has your current mailing address, phone number and email address so they can contact you about your health insurance. To update your information:
 - Call NY State of Health at 1-855-355-5777 (TTY: 1-800-662-1220)
 - Log into your account at nystateofhealth.ny.gov, or
 - Contact an [enrollment assistor](#)

If you enrolled in Medicaid through your county's Medicaid office or through New York City's Human Resources Administration, contact that office to update your address and contact information.

CDC Increasing Community Access to Testing (ICATT) Program

The ICATT program provides access to no-cost COVID-19 testing in the community at participating ICATT sites to people with or without health insurance **who are experiencing symptoms or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19**. ICATT sites may offer PCR or antigen COVID-19 tests. Testing costs will be billed to your insurance provider, whether you have Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance. If you do not have health insurance, you will not have to pay for COVID-19 testing at ICATT sites. [You can search for ICATT program testing sites here.](#)



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