



Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon



Summer 2026: Back to School Edition!

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

There's nothing quite like summer in the district, from enjoying our local restaurants to visiting parks and museums, to taking the subway to the beach. This was a particularly special summer with the Tall Ships docking in Brooklyn Bridge Park, the fireworks on our waterfront, and World Cup festivities. I hope you enjoyed the activities and had some rest and relaxation, as well.

There have also been incredible celebrations to mark America 250 and the Battle of Brooklyn. I was pleased to work with my Brooklyn colleagues to secure funding for Brooklyn250, a borough-wide commemoration of the historic Battle of Brooklyn, which was the largest battle of the American Revolution. Our incredible partners put together public exhibits and battle re-enactments, including the Prospect Park Alliance, Green-Wood Cemetery, Center for Brooklyn History, and Old Stone House. There are still some exhibits on display: https://theoldstonehouse.org/revolutionary_brooklyn/

Despite the summer months being when things traditionally slow down, in AD52, that never really happens. Among the issues we are working on is the Atlantic Yards project, the BQE/triple cantilever, the Brooklyn Marine Terminal, the development of the LICH site, and the Brooklyn House of Detention development. Contact our office to stay informed of community meetings and public comment periods.

Now it's time to embrace the return to school for our youngest learners, so this newsletter has policy and educational resources for families and students. I'd love your feedback on other topics that you'd like to learn about, or resources that you want us to share with your neighbors. Please don't hesitate to contact my office.

We are blessed with many fine public schools in the district. Having good public schools is among the reasons people look to move to AD52, and that in turn creates robust parental engagement, which we all know is key to school success. So wherever you are in this mix, thank you!

Please stop by my office in Carroll Gardens to meet my staff or to get help on unemployment, SNAP, HEAP, housing, health care, education, transit and more.

It is truly my privilege to serve you.

Very truly yours,

Jo Anne Simon
Member of the Assembly

**To receive more
regular updates on policy and community news,
email simonj@nyassembly.gov
to sign-up for my bi-weekly email alerts.**

Resources

Advocates for Children Education Helpline (866) 427-6033. Call for help navigating the NYC Dept. of Education, knowing your rights, or finding legal assistance.

Free After-School Programs for Students. The NYC Department of Youth and Community Development offers after-school programs, including homework help, art, sports, STEAM, leadership, and more. Call 800-246-4646 or visit dycdconnect.nyc.gov.

Mayor's Office Childcare Finder: www.nyc.gov/content/childcarehub/pages/

Mental Health Help. Are you in crisis, experiencing emotional distress, or worried about someone you know? Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Older Adults Resource Guide. Non-profit and government resources on housing, legal services, public benefits, healthcare, cultural activities, work and volunteer opportunities. Email simonj@nyassembly.gov for a copy.

DSNY Trash Bin Rules. The warning period for buildings with 1-9 units without an official bin ends soon, with fines taking effect on Sept. 8. <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dsny/>

Senior Citizen or Disability Rent Freeze. SCRIE and DRIE helps certain people by freezing their rent at the current level and exempting them from future increases. Apply at <https://www.nyc.gov/site/rentfreeze/>. **The new income eligibility is for households making \$75k or less a year. New York City needs to pass a local law to adopt this State change, which we anticipate will happen this Fall.*

Housing Connects lists affordable rental lotteries. 212-863-7990. <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/>

NYC's Tenant Helpline answers your housing questions, refers you to legal services, and provides case management. Call 311.

Unclaimed funds. Check if you have unclaimed funds held by NYS. Call the NYS Comptroller at 1-800-221-9311 or <https://www.osc.ny.gov/unclaimed-funds>

Public Policy Updates

In this year’s state budget, we secured several incredible victories for New Yorkers like a real path to universal child care, enhanced foundation aid for students, mental health protections, expanded free tuition for more students, support for public transit, immigration protections, Tier 6 reforms for workers, rent freezes for certain older adults and people with disabilities, and utility rebate checks. We also helped New York City and other cities close their budget gaps because of federal cuts.

I am extremely pleased that we are funding a real **path to achieving universal child care**. I have fought for this for many years and couldn’t be happier that we are finally on our way. I’m grateful to NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani for prioritizing this initiative to get it over the finish line.

Education Funding: Among the budget victories I am most proud of is that the budget included my bill to increase the weights given to our schools for foundation aid to reflect the needs of students who are living in shelters, those who are in foster care or for whom English is a second language (A9048). These students’ needs are greater and schools with larger numbers of such students need more resources. NYC schools will see \$143 million from the weight increase alone.

The city will receive \$11 billion in foundation aid, which is a \$538 million increase over last year, and more than \$15.2 billion in total school aid from the state in 2026-27.

Class Size Mandates: In addition, we were able to provide more financial resources for implementing my proposal to reduce NYC class size mandates and gave the schools some additional time to comply.

Maternal Mental Health. I am also proud to have introduced a bill (A11315) that would require the Masters of Social Work degree programs at SUNY and CUNY schools to offer an elective on maternal mental health. This is important to address postpartum depression and early menopause and ensure that clinicians are trained to provide appropriate care.

Need support? The Postpartum Resource Center of NY provides a dedicated helpline (855-631-0001) and free and confidential resources, such as virtual support groups including ones for Black mothers, dads, and Spanish speakers.

LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES

I was proud to pass several pieces of legislation this session, many of which await the Governor’s signature. Two of my bills focus on **competency restoration**, the process used when a person with a serious mental illness is unable to understand the charges being brought against them and found incompetent to stand trial. Too often, people spend months waiting in jail or cycle between correctional and psychiatric facilities while their cases are on hold. One of my bills (A11024) establishes a workgroup to monitor, access, and recommend improvements to the competency restoration process. The second bill (A5567) would create a faster path to restoration by expanding access to treatment and services, including in community-based settings so individuals can receive care in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their needs.

I also passed legislation that strengthens transparency in the eviction process by requiring timely electronic filing of eviction notices (A8567). Another bill I passed protects residents of adult care facilities by ensuring residents and families receive greater notice when a facility is closing so they can plan and ensure access to safe stable housing (A5998). I also passed legislation directing the Department of Agriculture and Markets to study vertical farming and its potential to support local food production in the state (A10703).

We also passed a bill banning surveillance pricing which has become law (A9349B). Right under our noses, companies have been collecting our browsing history, our location, when we get paid, and even how long we might hover over a product online, and use that data to charge us the highest price they think we would pay. You and your neighbor can visit the same website on the same day at the same time and see two completely different prices for the exact same product!

Revenue is needed to breathe real life into our priorities. I am glad that the state budget we passed included a pied-à-terre tax to enable New York City to place an annual surcharge on certain luxury properties that aren’t used as a primary residence for the owner, tenants, or certain family members. You should have received a letter from the City Department of Finance (DOF) if the tax may apply to you. You can **apply for an exemption by the new extended date of October 6th, 2026** if you believe the surcharge doesn’t apply to your property.

We realize that this process has been disconcerting to constituents as the original supplemental property tax roll that was published (in accordance with state law) was much larger than the properties that will ultimately be subject to the surcharge. This list was published so that DOF could identify properties that may be subject to the surcharge. I’m confident that when all is said and done, the correct people will be assessed the tax. Visit the DOF website for details or to get help: nyc.gov/npsurcharge

LOCAL EDUCATION RESOURCES & NEWS

Connecting with Community Education Councils (CEC’s).

CECs are volunteer parents and community leaders dedicated to supporting local district schools. Their responsibilities include working with the superintendent to evaluate student progress, approving school zoning lines, participating in joint hearings, and hosting monthly meetings. While the 12 CEC member positions are elected or appointed, anyone is welcome to attend the meetings. If you would like to contact CECs 13 or 15, which span AD-52, email cec15@schools.nyc.gov or cec13@schools.nyc.gov

New Local Pre-K and 3-K Sites to Open in September.

My team joined Mayor Zohran Mamdani and Council Member Lincoln Restler at the ribbon cutting of a new Pre-K and 3-K site on 274 Atlantic Ave, which will add 63 long-awaited early childhood seats to the area. I’m grateful to the Council Member for relentlessly pushing for the opening of the center - which inexplicably sat vacant under the previous Mayor - and to the Mayor for making it a reality.

Additionally, after much advocacy from community members in the Columbia Street Waterfront District, the City has agreed to open the site at 129 Van Brunt St., which will add another 63 new seats.

Summer Rising. I was delighted to visit a Summer Rising classroom with Chancellor of NYC Public Schools Kamar Samuels to see students learning and having fun all summer long. Summer Rising gives students in K-8 grade the opportunity to strengthen their reading and math skills while making the most of their summer break. Enrollment traditionally opens in early March through MySchools.

MENTAL HEALTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE

As Chair of the Mental Health Committee, one of the top concerns I hear about is the mental health crisis that people are facing - particularly young people. I'm glad to report that **we made significant budget investments in services like teen mental health first aid**. Teen mental health first aid trains teens, parents and caregivers, and school staff how to recognize signs and offer initial support to youth who may be experiencing mental health challenges or substance use concerns. We also invested more in school-based health clinics which are the only access to physical or mental health care for many students.

We have also **strengthened protections from online threats to youth**—including certain social media and gaming platforms—by strengthening privacy defaults and parental controls, and disabling addictive feeds and certain Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbot features (A8148A, 2024). The Governor and the Attorney General just published final rules for this law, which will take effect in January of 2027. I'm grateful to Governor Hochul for leading on this issue.

I've also advanced legislation (A9106) that would **prevent mental health professionals from using AI to diagnose or treat those with mental health conditions**, while allowing it for administration purposes like note-taking. People seeking therapy and mental health services should be cared for by qualified professionals. I'm also pleased that we passed a bill to ensure that there are guardrails on unsafe chatbot features like interactions on self harm and other unhealthy behaviors (A10379). Maria Raine, LCSW, came to Albany from California to push for this bill after her son committed suicide with assistance from AI chatbot interactions.

Teen Gambling. For many teens and young adults, gambling doesn't mean going into a casino; it means opening an app on their phone. Problem gambling, including digital sports betting and video game betting, are a growing mental health concern, with teens being 2-4 times more likely to develop a gambling disorder compared to adults because the part of the brain responsible for judgment and impulse control is still developing (UNICEF). Parents should watch for warning signs like sudden changes in spending habits, a new interest in sports, or declining school performance, and have an open conversation about the risk of online gambling.

Resources are available through the NYS Office of Addiction Services and Support at <https://oasas.ny.gov/gambling>. Confidential support is available for anyone affected by gambling harms, including family members and friends regardless of ability to pay. Contact the NYS 24/7 HOPEline: 1-877-846-7369 (HOPENY) or text 467369 (HOPENY).

You can also visit this website for youth, young adults, and parents: <https://youdecideny.org/>

If you or someone who knows is struggling with any issue, you are not alone. Help is available 24/7 by calling or texting 988.

NAMI-NYC's Mental Health support for teens includes support groups for ages 14-19. Teens can also text the Teen Helpline Monday-Friday, 10am-5pm at 212-684-3264. naminycmetro.org

NY REGENTS WILL VOTE ON REGULATIONS TO IMPROVE STUDENT LITERACY RATES

Improving literacy rates for New York's children has been one of my top priorities since I joined the Assembly. One of the key changes I have been pushing for is ensuring that future teachers are trained in the science of reading - an evidence-based approach that focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. After years of advocacy, we are seeing more fruits of the labor of our strong coalition of legislators, teachers, parents and students, and advocates.

This year, I joined state partners to discuss implementation of the Path Forward, a statewide action plan to improve literacy which includes the state's science of reading framework. We're building real alignment across systems, educational institutions, and leaders around what it takes to get literacy right. I was pleased to moderate a panel of leaders from a few of our 11 teacher training pilot programs at colleges around the state. We added funding for two more pilots in this year's budget.

I recently attended a Board of Regents meeting where New York officials proposed updates to its teacher preparation programs to align educator training with the state's science of reading framework. These changes would help ensure future teachers are equipped with evidence-based strategies to teach reading effectively, giving every student a stronger foundation for success. The Regents will vote on the new proposal in November, after a public comment period. Check our social media to see when the comment period and link are open.

Improvements to our teacher prep programs can't happen fast enough. Half of the teacher prep programs in New York that were surveyed did not adequately teach reading, according to a 2026 report from the National Council on Teacher Quality. Further, about 41% of the state's fourth graders were reading at the lowest level in 2024, according to a report from the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

It will take an ecosystem—educators, community partners and families, researchers, funders, policymakers, and advocates—to achieve this goal, and I am proud to be a part of this exciting and meaningful work.

To help build support for improving New York's literacy rates, I've also organized a statewide event for the last 11 years - Dyslexia & Literacy Advocacy Day. Students, parents, educators, and advocates gather in Albany to call for stronger literacy policies and support for students. It's incredibly inspiring to witness these brave students and their families travel to Albany to make their voices heard.

TRANSIT AND STREET SAFETY UPDATES

Dean & Bergen Bike Boulevard Feedback.

NYC DOT is planning a bike boulevard project and is seeking feedback to help shape the design. If you live, work, and travel these streets, your input is critical to creating a project that reflects the community's needs. Please share your feedback through an online survey that is open through October 1st on the NYC DOT website.

The Bergen Bike Bus, a caravan of bikers that travels to school together, has been active since 2022 and meets every Wednesday at 7:15 a.m. during the school year. Bike buses are a great way to empower families and youth to use active and sustainable transportation.

Superspeeders Bill (Gounardes / Gallagher A2299): Anyone caught speeding by a school zone safety camera more than 16 times in a year will be required to attach a speed limiter device to their car. It's hard to imagine, but there is a small group of people who are chronic speeders and they make life more dangerous for us all. This bill will make us all safer and I'm glad it was enacted as part of the state budget.

CLIMATE AND OUR FUTURE

We added \$1 billion in environmental sustainability funds and added another \$100 million in renewable energy in this year's state budget. We've had some other legislative victories, but New York took a major step back with the rollback of our flagship climate law.

We passed a moratorium on new data centers (A11560) in New York as we face rising energy costs, strain on our power grid, and threats to land and water resources from the rapid expansion of unchecked data centers. The demand for new centers is primarily driven by massive energy required for the skyrocketing use of AI. New York should not be forced to pay the price of Big Tech's energy usage. That bill is awaiting the Governor's signature. I am very pleased that the Governor signed an executive order to put a one-year moratorium on new large data centers.

I'm glad that we passed a bill to make it easier for New Yorkers who rent or live in apartments to install solar panels at home and lower energy costs through the SUNNY Act (A9111). This plug-in solar option is a practical, low-cost solution that lets you generate power from your windows or balcony and has been successfully instituted elsewhere.

I introduced a new bill (A11433) to establish a moratorium on new nuclear development in New York. Nuclear power facilities are among the most expensive and slowest energy sources to deploy (Cato Institute), and the high cost and lengthy timeline was also documented in the State's NYSEERDA nuclear energy report. Nuclear facilities are also infamous for significant cost overruns and delays including the reactor that was built but never opened on Long Island (Times Union, New York <https://www.timesunion.com/capitol/article/hochul-huge-nuclear-ambitions-energy-bills-22371821.php>). The only recent U.S. projects in decades—the Vogtle nuclear power facilities in Georgia—far exceeded original budgets and imposed long-term financial burdens on ratepayers (<https://gcvedfund.org/plant-vogtle/>). My bill would not allow new facilities to be built in the next two and a half years using taxpayers' funds, during which time an independent Task Force would conduct an assessment.

The Governor has proposed to build several new nuclear plants in New York, and I want to ensure that we are focused on affordable, scalable renewable energy that is within our reach and that can be created quickly so that we can address rising utility bills.

Climate Law Rollback: I voted no on the budget bill to rollback our landmark 2019 Climate Change Law (the CLCPA). The rollback won't lower energy bills – the Governor's main stated reason for the change – but rather would lock us into fossil fuels which are the main driver of high utility bills.

Renewable energy – from wind to solar to battery storage – is the cheapest and most easily scalable (Alliance for Clean Energy NY). Further, investments in affordable energy creates good union jobs. Clean energy industries have already created 185,000 jobs in NY (NY Power Authority).

This topic is not only top of New Yorkers minds due to energy affordability, but it's one of the greatest threats to humanity and future generations. It's no wonder that so many of you weighed in strongly in favor of protecting the climate law.

New York State Assembly, Albany, New York 12248



Assemblymember
**Jo Anne
Simon**

***Reports
to the People***

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Java with Jo Anne, Sept. 17. Is there a community issue or current event you're passionate about? Come and talk with me about it! Join me and your neighbors at my next "Java with Jo Anne" on Thursday, September 17, 9:30 – 11am, at the Scion Project, 288 Smith St., backyard. Email simonj@nyassembly.gov to receive invites to our Javas.

Flu Shot Drive, Oct. 1. I'm partnering with NYU Langone Health to provide free flu shots to the community on October 1st at the Cobble Hill ED, 70 Atlantic Ave. Insurance is not required. To schedule an appointment, call my office at 718-246-4889 or email simonj@nyassembly.gov.

No-Cost Mammograms, Nov. 13. My office is partnering with the Italian American Cancer Foundation to bring the mammogram bus to my office on November 13. Mammograms are free, for anyone with or without insurance, 40-79 years old, who have not had a mammogram for one year. Call my office at 718-246-4889 or email simonj@nyassembly.gov to make an appointment.