



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

At the joint hearing on Mental Hygiene in Albany, I questioned the Commissioner of the Office for People With Developmental Disabilities in my role as Chair of the Assembly Disabilities Committee on the workforce crisis. Our enclosed update has a Disabilities Committee Report including coverage of the hearing.

We submitted our State budget priorities to Assembly leadership including a letter I authored and signed by many of my colleagues to call for the inclusion of an 8.5% Cost of Living Adjustment and the creation of a Direct Support Wage Enhancement (DSWE) in the budget; and a letter to support the 4201 schools, which provide education and related services to students who are deaf, blind, and severely physically disabled.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if we can be of assistance.

Phone: 212.288.4607

Email: SeawrightR@NYAssembly.gov

Sincerely,

REBECCA A. SEAWRIGHT

People With Disabilities Committee Report

**Chair Seawright Questions Commissioner On
Workforce Crisis For Vulnerable Population**



TIMES UNION

Lawmakers warn of potential workforce crisis among mental hygiene nonprofits

Assemblywoman Rebecca Seawright noted that high turnover rates have led to what she called a "massive jobs hemorrhage" as workers, especially those in the nonprofit sector, seek jobs in other industries that pay more.

ALBANY — State lawmakers pressed for answers at a hearing at the Capitol Thursday on whether enough money is allocated in Gov. Kathy Hochul's executive budget for workers who regularly deal with New York's most vulnerable residents to compensate for what some call a historically underfunded system.

[Read More](#)

Seawright Rallies With Advocates For Investment In I/DD Services In The Budget



Hundreds of disability advocates from across New York State filled the Capitol Building's War Room and hallways for a Statewide rally calling on the New York Senate and Assembly to include an 8.5% COLA and establish a Direct Support Wage Enhancement in their respective SFY 2024 one-house budgets.

Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright spoke at the rally attended by staff of provider agencies and hundreds of self and family advocates.

"The not-for-profits are a lifeline for people living with developmental disabilities. Without them, people will be in danger and lose their right to autonomy. We must advocate for a sustained and fully funded workforce for the I/DD sector. Together, we will make ourselves clear that we need to invest in the New York dream for people with disabilities with an 8.5% COLA and the Direct Support Wage Enhancement," said Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright.





Seawright Meets With YAI National Institute for People with Disabilities Advocates



Budget Hearing Update

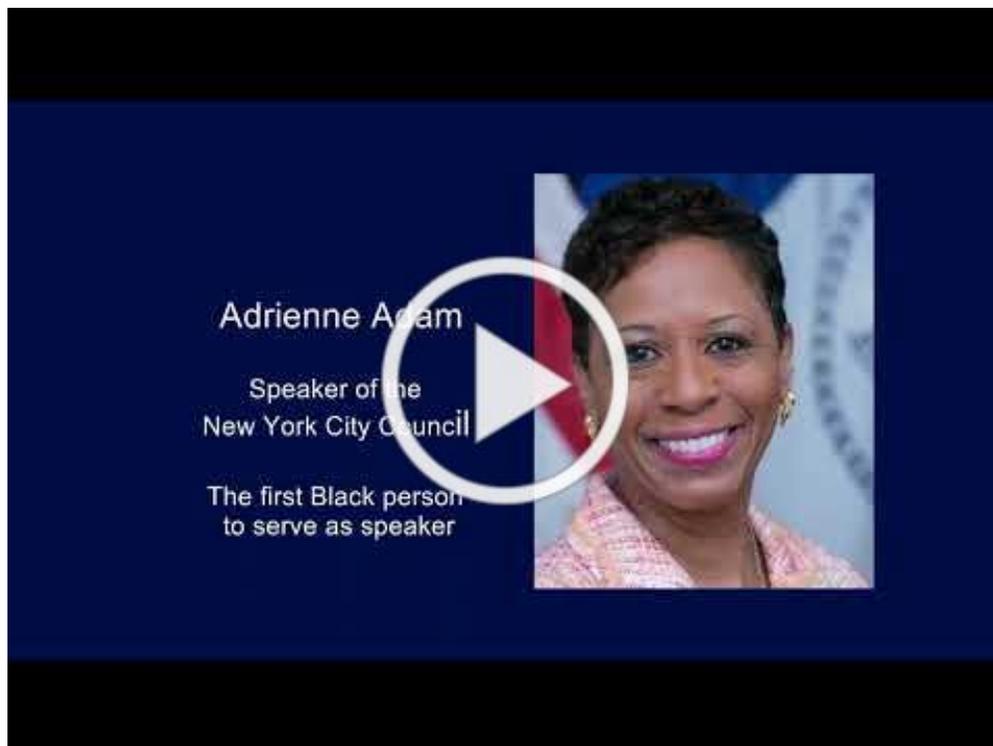
Seawright Questions NYC Mayor Adams On Services For People With Disabilities In The City of New York



In Albany, we continue our oversight work of state agencies with budget hearings. This week, I questioned Mayor Adams at the hearing on local governments about the City's efforts to support people with disabilities in the City of New York and to ask about RIOC board vacancies.

National Black History Month

Spotlight On Women In Government



In celebrating Black History Month, we would like to share the Legislative Women's

Caucus video honoring Black Women in New York State who have made and are still making history.

SUNY Student Assembly Leaders



Assembly Member Seawright met with the Student Assembly of the State University. The Student Assembly is the official student government organization by which SUNY students can participate in University-wide governance.

They are advocating to reform and increase funding for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and the Excelsior Scholarship Program among other important higher education initiatives.

Higher Education Activists Visit Capitol Advocating For Reforms



Renewable Heat Now!



Isaac and Alycia, advocates from the Renewable Heat Now campaign to accelerate the adoption of clean and renewable ground-source and air-source heat pumps in New York.

Assembly Members Rebecca Seawright And Vivian Cook Discuss Better Aid For New York Students!



Communications Workers Of America (CWA)
District 1 Met With Assembly Member Seawright To
Discuss Legislative Priorities



Communications Workers of America (CWA) District 1 met with Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright concerning increased funding for healthcare workers, \$1.3 Billion for safety net hospitals, and a 10% medicaid rate increase; eliminating fees for SUNY graduate student workers; raising the minimum wage for almost 2.9 million workers to \$20/hour and index increases to inflation and labot productivity.



"Rape is Rape" Bill Passes Assembly

Survivors deserve justice!

Every 68 seconds an American is sexually assaulted. Every 9 minutes that victim is a child.^{1,2}

Only 25 out of every 1,000 perpetrators will end up serving a prison sentence.³

¹<https://www.raimn.org/statistics/victim-sexual-violence>

²<https://www.raimn.org/statistics/children-and-teens>

³<https://www.raimn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>

Statement by Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright on the passage of the "Rape is Rape" legislation: *"The numbers are startling and sickening, an American is sexually assaulted every 68 seconds, and every 9 minutes that victim is a child. However, out of every 1,000 perpetrators, only 25 will end up serving a prison sentence. These abusers must be held accountable for their heinous actions, and that's why I'm fighting to create a criminal justice system that empowers survivors of sexual assault. To that end, we once again passed the 'Rape is Rape' bill to expand New York's rape statutes and help more survivors seek justice (A.3340).*

The bill I voted to pass removes the penetration requirement from the state's rape statutes as well as expands the definition of rape to include oral and anal sexual conduct crimes. Under current law, oral and anal sexual conduct are referred to as 'criminal sexual acts' and are not recognized as rape. Not calling these horrific crimes what they are has both legal and emotional consequences for survivors, both invalidating and adding to the trauma they've already endured.

With the passing of this bill, we've taken another step forward toward righting this wrong and helping survivors seek the justice they deserve. I'll always work to ensure that New York is a place where victims are heard and supported, and perpetrators are held accountable under the law."

**Ndaba Mandela, Grandson of Nelson Mandela and
Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine
Were Surprise Guest Speakers At Seawright
Community Function**



Local City & State Journalist and host of Political Personalities Skye Ostreicher and Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright.



Ndaba Mandela, Grandson of Nelson Mandela and Community Board 8 Member Shari Weiner.



Dr. Barbara Rosen and Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine.

Helpful Resources

IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly

NEED HELP FILING YOUR TAXES THIS YEAR?

The IRS's **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** and **Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE)** programs offer free basic tax return preparation for eligible taxpayers. These programs are a reliable, trusted source for preparing tax returns and are available at multiple locations.



Need help doing your taxes? The IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs offer free basic tax return preparation for seniors. For more information or to see if you are eligible for these services, please visit <https://www.irs.gov/filing/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free> or call 800-906-9887.

Upcoming Events



Eat more food, waste less, compost & restore beauty.



iDig2Learn In-Person Events

RSVP to attend one or more. All ages.

SUN. FEB. 19 / 4-6PM

Featuring: Alex from Nisi + Friends
Kick off Bellies, Bins and Beauty.
RSVP Keyword: **NISI**

MON. FEB. 27 / 6:30-8PM

Featuring: The Soup Lady
Sample Soup & Learn Herb Usage.
RSVP Keyword: **SOUP**

WED. MAR. 1 / 6:30-8PM

Featuring: Dr. Kathie Grimm
Eat Well & Mediterrean Eatery.
RSVP Keyword: **DOC**

SAT. MAR. 11 / 1-3PM

Featuring: Beatrice Ajaero of Nneji
Make Fonio! A Taste of West Africa.
RSVP Keyword: **AFRICA**

Space is limited. RSVP a must to secure a spot.
Email the RSVP keyword(s) to idedig2learn@gmail.com
Please include the number of people.
Location confirmed with reservation confirmation.



Follow us IG: @iDig2Learn

This grants was awarded by NYS Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright and administered through Office of Children & Family Services.
iDig2Learn is a project of Open Space Institute a non profit 501(c)3 public charity.



ASSEMBLY MEMBER REBECCA SEAWRIGHT



BOOK DRIVE

for kids in under-resourced NYC Schools
through March 8, 2023

District Office of Assembly Member
Rebecca Seawright
1485 York Avenue (78/79 Streets)

- ✓ **Yes:** new and gently used books for pre-school through high school
- ✗ **NO:** Adult books, textbooks, library discards, or out-of-date non-fiction/reference books

Want to order books from the Project Cicero wishlist?
Visit projectcicero.org/wish-list



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Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright | 1485 York Avenue, New York, NY 10075 212-288-4607

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