



NEWS From
Assemblymember

John T. McDonald III

Summer 2024

2024 Post NYS Budget and Legislative Session



Assemblymember McDonald speaking on a bill during Assembly session

This year the Legislature passed a \$237 billion budget with no increases in income taxes and I entered my second year as Chair of the NYS Assembly Governmental Operations Committee. Out of the 114 bills that I sponsored this year, 20 bills passed both houses of the NYS Legislature, 5 passed the Assembly only, and 52 bills that I cosponsored have passed both houses. In addition to my legislative duties and responsibilities, I continue to focus on providing exceptional constituent services and helping people navigate government agencies to get the answers that they need.

As always, feel free to reach out to me with any concerns you may have or assistance that you may need. I believe in public service in the truest sense and that means I am elected to work for you, an honor that I never take for granted.

Thank you for your valuable input on legislation that I sponsor and other bills that came up during the legislative year. As always, I look forward to hearing about the topics that you care about.

Sincerely,

Assemblymember John T. McDonald III, RPh

Burdett Birth Center

In June 2023, St. Peters Health Partners announced that they proposed to close the Burdett Birth Center (BBC) in Troy. BBC is the only birth center in Rensselaer County and the impacts of a closure would have been devastating for Capital Region communities and negatively impacted maternal health outcomes. After ten months of advocacy and discussion, the announcement was made in April 2024 that BBC will stay open for at least five years due to a maternal health grant in the New York State Budget that I worked to secure. It was an emotional ride for many but I do believe the community's voice was heard and there is a greater appreciation for the work that BBC accomplishes as it relates to maternal health. We now have an opportunity to expand BBC's reach in our communities and as a model of care as we welcome our newest members into the world while focusing on improving health outcomes.



Assemblymember McDonald and Save Burdett Birth Center advocates at the press conference announcing that Burdett Birth Center will stay open



Highlights of Legislative Accomplishments

Notable McDonald Bills that Passed Both the Senate and the Assembly *(Pending decision by the Executive):*

- **A10312 - Designates a portion of the state highway system as the CW2 Casey N. Frankoski Memorial Bridge**

I sponsored a resolution in the Assembly honoring the life of Casey Frankoski who died serving her country with honor and distinction as a member of the U.S. Army National Guard. Her dedication and bravery as a Chief Warrant Officer and Black Hawk helicopter pilot exemplify her commitment to protecting and serving others. I also passed a bill to name the Washington Ave Bridge in Rensselaer over I-90 as the CW2 Casey N. Frankoski Memorial Bridge.

The renaming of the bridge on Washington Ave in the City of Rensselaer will be a fitting tribute to a hero who will always be remembered for her great selflessness and bravery.

- **A901-A - Requires a utilization review agent to follow certain rules when establishing a step therapy protocol**

This bill provides additional patient protections that are intended to ensure that patients do not need to try and fail repeatedly on medications and that step therapy protocols do not cause significant delays in access to prescribed medications. Step therapy protocols that ignore prior failures or cause long delays can result in adverse events, including disease progression and relapse. By streamlining the process, patients will benefit and access to treatment will be improved.

- **A5984-B - Relates to the dispensal of controlled substances by ER practitioners**

This bill aligns the NYS Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement with the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) to allow clinicians working in hospitals, clinics, and emergency rooms to dispense 3 days of buprenorphine and methadone. Creating consistency with the DEA recommendation will be beneficial in light of the all-hands-on-deck approach to ensure medically assisted treatment is available to all. Many urban and rural areas' access to health care can be limited; therefore, this is a common-sense change.

- **A7214 - Provides that health care plan participation by physicians shall be reported, for purposes of physician profiles, by the health care plans**

This is another patient access bill regarding the physician profile which is a publicly available highly utilized online database. The bill makes it easier for the information to be submitted for the physician which will lead to increased reporting and will provide consumers with accurate and up-to-date information.

- **A7215 - Directs the Commissioner of Health and Commissioner of the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities to conduct a study of the delivery of services to individuals with traumatic brain injury**

This legislation will direct a study on the delivery of services to New Yorkers with traumatic brain injuries. Specifically, the study will evaluate the availability and accessibility of quality services, emerging trends, regional disparities, and the effectiveness of the administrative process for individuals with traumatic brain injury to receive official approvals or denials of services.

- **A8374 - Authorizes regional planning council's eligibility for federal and/or state grants**

Regional Planning Commissions work with local governments in a coordinated and cooperative effort. They often coordinate local government projects yet are not able to directly secure funding which can be a barrier to or delay project completion. This bill will allow RPCs to apply directly for grants and funding which will streamline the process. By expediting the implementation of projects, this will be more cost-effective for taxpayers.

- **A8467-A - Relates to the dispensing of drug adulterant testing supplies by health care professionals or pharmacists**

In 2023, a bill that I sponsored, "Matthew's Law," was chaptered into law and authorized pharmacists to dispense drug adulterant testing supplies. However, xylazine was not included in the list of drug adulterants. Xylazine not only contributes to overdose deaths but also leads to significant skin wounds that can result in amputation along with the risk of seizures. This bill includes xylazine in the list of drug adulterants and allows pharmacists to dispense xylazine testing supplies.

- **A9369-A - Relates to the automatic identification of elderly pharmaceutical insurance coverage program participants who are eligible for HEAP**

The implementation of a file-matching strategy aligning the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) with the Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage Program (EPIC) is a crucial step in addressing New York's senior energy affordability challenges. This bill automatically enrolls EPIC eligible seniors into HEAP, thereby improving participation rates.

- **A9966 - Extends certain provisions relating to regulatory fines for small businesses**

This bill extends the 2019 small business cure period law that I sponsored. New York's small businesses are heavily regulated and are not always aware of the numerous current and new regulations. This extension of the current law allows small businesses to have a cure period to remedy de minimus first violations that do not threaten health or safety.

- **A10209 - Relates to qualified withdrawals under the New York state college choice tuition savings program**

This bill implements a federal law permitting the use of 529 savings to repay certain student loans and rollover account proceeds to Roth IRAs. This bill amends New York law to conform to the federal law and allows NY 529 Program account owners to use proceeds from their 529 accounts to repay student loans for the account beneficiary or their sibling and to contribute funds to Roth IRAs for the benefit of their 529 account beneficiaries, with no New York State tax consequences.

- **A10219 - Relates to expedited payments of abandoned property under a certain monetary threshold**

This bill would expedite the return of unclaimed funds by the Office of the State Comptroller, Office of Unclaimed Funds (OUF) to the rightful owners. In an effort to expedite OUF's unclaimed funds process, this proposal seeks to permit proactive payment by the OUF of certain unclaimed funds under an established monetary threshold to an apparent owner, after verification.

2024-25

NYS Budget Highlights

This year the NYS Legislature passed a budget that reflects the priorities of all residents of the state of New York, diverse as it may be. Below are just a few of the many elements in the budget that benefit residents and taxpayers:

- Aid and Incentives for Municipalities (AIM) Aid to local governments - \$50 million increase - first major increase in over 15 years to support cities, towns, and villages as they carry out their services to residents and control property taxes.
- Restoration of Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) Funding and Arterial Maintenance funding which combined with Extreme Winter Recovery, PAVE-NY, and Pave Our Potholes funds total over \$1 billion to help local governments maintain and improve their roads.
- Continuation of holding the line on Medicaid costs to our counties as NYS has absorbed over \$37 billion off of counties and taxpayers since 2015 which has led to property tax reductions and enhanced services.
- Investments in Economic & Workforce Development programs such as the new ON-RAMP and local programs such as the Multi-Craft Apprenticeship Preparation Program (MAPP) to help train tomorrow's workforce in the building trades and wind turbine industry.
- Restoration of \$250 million for a total of \$500 million to continue the Assembly-established Clean Water Infrastructure fund which is needed now more than ever.
- A third year of COLA increases for those who care for the disabled and infirm.
- Another year of increases to support our struggling hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities.
- Adding a second year of funding for Alive Downtowns! to help support our upstate local historic theatre venues that support our local downtowns.
- Taking aggressive steps to address retail organized crime and repeat shoplifting/stealing from small businesses and increasing penalties for hate crimes. These items are not unique to New York and as a long-time public official, I know how important public safety is to those we represent. Data and facts are important, we are in a time where public perception runs contrary to what the data shows and we need to make meaningful efforts to address the public's concerns.

These are just a few items to mention and there are many more but it is worth underscoring that these items and the rest of the state budget have resulted in no increase in taxes to the residents of this state!

This budget also works to address upstate housing concerns and works to address the issues that many families are concerned with - Safety, Taxes, Education, and Healthcare.

New York Child Data Protection Act and the SAFE for Kids Act

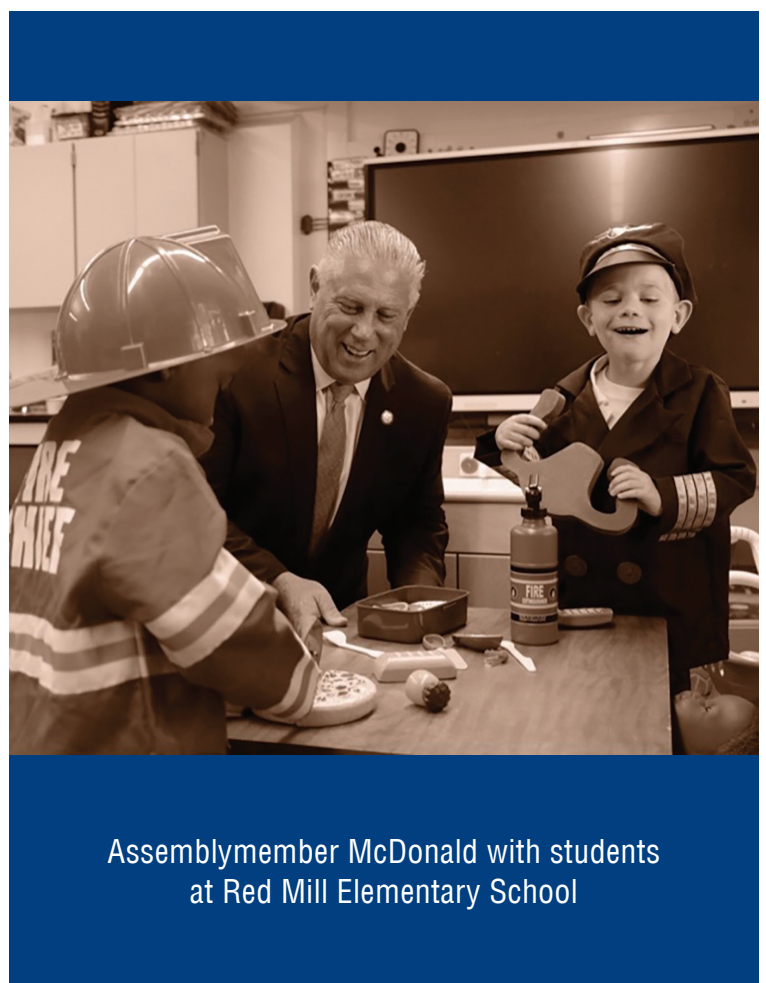
This year, I cosponsored bills that were passed in both houses and seek to protect kids online, where they have a growing presence.

Growing up today means kids interact with the internet and social media daily. While these tools help them learn and stay connected, they can also bring significant challenges, including mental health issues caused by exposure to hate-based content, cyberbullying, and misinformation.

Despite parents' efforts to protect their children, social media companies often exploit young, impressionable minds for profit. This is why I supported the New York Child Data Protection Act and the SAFE for Kids Act.

Details of the legislation:

- The SAFE for Kids Act prohibits social media platforms from providing addictive, algorithm-based feeds to those under 18 without parental consent and restricts notifications during late-night hours without consent.
- The New York Child Data Protection Act restricts digital services from collecting or processing personal data of users under 18 without consent and prohibits selling their data without informed consent, ensuring default privacy settings for children.
- Violations can lead to civil penalties of up to \$5,000 per incident, enforced by the attorney general.



Assemblymember McDonald with students at Red Mill Elementary School

Funding Available Through the 2024-25 NYS Budget

The 2024-25 NYS Budget included various funding streams that will be administered through state agencies. Please sign up for my weekly newsletter to remain up to date when the applications are released.


You can sign up on my Assembly website here
<https://nyassembly.gov/mem/John-T-McDonald-III/enews/>.

Need a speaker? I am always interested in speaking to groups and hearing what people have to say in the district. We have found great success with virtual meetings. This has provided me the opportunity to keep in touch with constituents. If your organization is interested in having me as a guest or would like a legislative update, please contact my office at 518-455-4474.

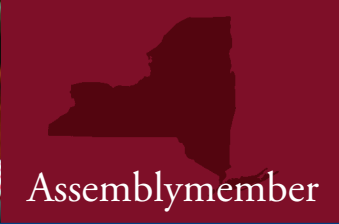
Thank you and I look forward to seeing you in the district!



New York State Assembly • Albany, New York 12248



NEWS From



Assemblymember

John T. McDonald III, RPh

2024 Post NYS Budget and Legislative Session

PRSR STD.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Albany, New York
Permit No. 75

2023 Constituent Survey Results

Thank you to all who participated in the Winter 2023 Constituent Survey. The ideas expressed in the responses help guide my decisions in the Legislature and I appreciate your participation and thoughtful responses.

The results are available on my website at
<https://nyassembly.gov/mem/John-T-McDonald-III/>

The level of participation this past year was extraordinary; we received 515 total responses including 296 electronic and 219 paper responses. For reference, the previous year we received 443 responses.

Please keep in mind that your input is always welcome year-round and you should always feel free to reach out to my office with any thoughts or comments.

Keep an eye out for the Fall/Winter 2024 Constituent Survey later this year.

It will be mailed and also will be available online.



ALBANY/DISTRICT OFFICE:

Room 625, Legislative Office Building • Albany, New York 12248 • 518-455-4474

EMAIL: mcdonaldj@nyassembly.gov

WEB: www.nyassembly.gov/mem/John-T-McDonald-III