

Dear neighbors and community,

As I shared yesterday, since it has been a handful of weeks since the last newsletter and out of an abundance of care for our collective sanity, I am splitting this newsletter into Part 1: state budget and federal news (yesterday's newsletter) and Part 2: legislative updates, news around the district, and local resources (today's newsletter).

Legislative Update



Medical Aid in Dying Passed in the Assembly

Earlier this month the Assembly passed the [Medical Aid in Dying Act](#), which would allow a terminally ill patient to request medication to end their lives with dignity. Ensuring compassionate choices at life's end is a responsibility we all bear to minimize unnecessary pain and suffering.

The Medical Aid in Dying Act would provide a mentally competent, terminally ill adult who has been given a prognosis of six months or less to live, the ability to request medication from their treating physician for medical aid in dying. The legislation includes safeguards, which would require both an oral request and a witnessed written request for the medication, as well as requiring at least two physicians to determine that the patient has the capacity to make an informed decision on this request. If deemed relevant, a mental health evaluation would be performed and the individual would only qualify if the mental health expert deems the individual mentally competent to make the decision. The medication must be administered by the individual themselves and there must be two witnesses who would not benefit from the decision in any way.

Under this bill, insurers would be prohibited from recommending or providing information on medical aid in dying to patients, including alongside denial of coverage notices for other treatments. Insurers would only be permitted to provide patients with information on medical aid in dying when the patient or their physician expressly requests such information or within general coverage information. Additionally, the legislation would provide legal protections for the patients and their physicians. Medical aid in dying is already permitted in 10 states, including California, Colorado, Hawaii, Maine, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington, as well as Washington, D.C.

The NY Senate has not moved or passed this legislation to date. You can watch my remarks from the [press conference here](#).



Fighting for Due Process and Dignity in Immigration Policy

Recent federal actions have thrown the lives of many immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in our region into uncertainty and fear. We've heard from community members who came to the U.S. legally through Humanitarian Parole, many of whom received letters in recent weeks revoking their work authorization and ordering them to leave the country within weeks—even as their asylum cases remain unresolved.

We also learned of a woman from a neighboring county who was detained when she appeared for her scheduled asylum check-in. She had not been informed that her attorney failed to file necessary paperwork. She was taken into custody without the opportunity to notify her family or access visitors, transferred to a detention center in Louisiana, and deported two weeks later. These cases are happening more and more. I share this to share that these actions are happening in our community as they are across the country.

I continue to advocate for a package of legislation that upholds due process and public safety by expanding access to legal, health, and language services for immigrant New Yorkers:

- [Access to Representation Act \(A270/S141\)](#): Establishes the right to legal counsel in immigration court proceedings.
- [Coverage4All \(A3020/S2237\)](#): Expands access to the state's Essential Plan to all income-eligible New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status.
- [New York for All Act \(A3506/S2235\)](#): Prohibits local law enforcement from sharing sensitive information with federal immigration authorities.
- [Language Access Expansion Act \(A4875/S5535\)](#): Ensures government services and documents are accessible in multiple languages across the state.

These bills are not just policy proposals—they are the infrastructure of justice and safety for families who call New York home. The people impacted by recent federal actions are not anonymous cases. They are working parents, students, and neighbors who contribute to our communities and deserve to be treated with dignity.

If you or someone you know is trying to locate a person currently held in immigration detention, you can use this searchable tool: <https://locator.ice.gov/odls/#/search>

What you can do:

Constituents from across the state can help by calling their state representatives, submitting written comments, and organizing outreach to educate others on the importance of these bills.



Toxic Biosolids on our Farmlands

On April 30th, Senator Pete Harckham and I held a press conference urging the passage of legislation to create a moratorium on the application of PFAS-laden biosolids on farmland ([A6192B/S5759A](#)). While New York State has taken some preliminary steps to limit PFAS in everyday products and drinking water, no similar actions have been taken to protect farmland, despite the threat these substances pose to human health and food safety. You can see my full remarks [here](#) at the press conference with fellow state legislators, local elected officials, farmers, and affected private citizens.

Biosolids, which are nutrient dense byproducts of wastewater treatment, are often spread on agricultural land as fertilizer and contain pollutants at various levels including PFAS, heavy metals, pathogens and pharmaceuticals. Studies have linked exposure to these chemicals with serious health effects such as cancers, developmental issues and immune system dysfunction. In the most recent NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Solid Waste Management Plan the state is promoting the expansion of spreading biosolids from wastewater treatment facilities from the current 22% to 56% highlighting the high nutrient levels it contains and the advantage of diverting the material from state landfills (we have about 15-25 years left of space in all state landfills). However, given that the EPA has determined that there are no safe levels of PFAS for human or animal consumption and that PFAS bioaccumulates in soils and in plants, many municipalities across the country and the state of Maine have banned the spreading of biosolids on farmland. [Thurston](#) and Cameron in Steuben County and Albany County [enacted a moratorium](#), which they have extended in response to PFAS contamination in drinking water as a result of biosolids spreading. Schoharie County recently became the latest New York county to do so.

This legislation would create a 5 year moratorium on the use of biosolids on agricultural land. During this time the law would require testing and reporting of PFAS levels routinely from wastewater treatment facilities, soil from farmland where biosolids have been used as fertilizer, and public and private drinking water within the vicinity of land application.



Strong Laws for Safer Food

On May 14th, the Senate Agriculture Committee voted to advance this legislation. On May 20th, the Assembly Agriculture Committee also voted to advance this legislation. In the Assembly it has been referred to codes and will go through three committees before reaching the floor for a final vote. It passed unanimously with all members in support.

Public action and support to date:

With the FDA gutting critical [food safety programs](#), firing large numbers of staff from the departments explicitly tasked with reviewing the safety of food chemicals, and falling short on meaningful regulation - including a weak “understanding” with industry to phase out [food dyes](#), my office joined a press conference alongside bill sponsors and advocates to call for stronger food safety and transparency laws in New York State. Key bills include:

- [Food Safety and Chemical Disclosure Act](#) (A1556C/S1239C) which will ban three dangerous food chemicals in foods sold statewide, and require companies to disclose evidence that their ingredients are actually safe to eat
- [Predatory Marketing Prevention Act](#) (A2584/S397) which will restrict misleading targeted food and beverage marketing aimed at children and adolescents

- [Sodium Warning Bill](#) (A5207/S428) which will require clear sodium warning icons on chain restaurant menus to ensure transparency and help consumers make informed choices

On Wednesday, April 30th, my office co-hosted a webinar with Senator Kavanagh on the Food Safety & Chemical Disclosure Act ([A1556C/S1239C](#)). The full webinar, and most of the presenters' slide decks, are available for viewing [here](#). The full text of the paper at the center of the discussion is available [here](#).

What does this bill do?

Currently, there's a major loophole in how food additives are regulated. Since 1958, any new food additives in the U.S. have been required to be proven safe before use. However, there's an exception for additives considered "Generally Recognized as Safe" (GRAS). Originally, this was meant for common, everyday ingredients like salt, vinegar, and baking soda—substances with a long history of safe use. But over time, this exemption has been used for many chemical additives, allowing companies to bypass the more rigorous safety approval process.

In 1997, the FDA made this process even more lenient by making the GRAS notification system voluntary. By 2016, this rule was finalized, allowing companies to self-determine if an additive is safe without notifying the FDA or the public. As a result, the exact number of additives in our food is unknown, though it's estimated to be over 10,000. Despite this, companies argue their self-regulation is thorough enough to ensure safety.

This bill takes a straightforward approach: if companies already have safety research for these additives, they must share that information in a publicly accessible database to continue selling their products in New York. This ensures transparency and helps consumers make informed choices.

The bill also targets specific harmful additives, prohibiting the use of the food additives FD&C Red 3, potassium bromate and propylparaben, all of which are known to be associated with harmful health effects. For example, potassium bromate and propylparaben—banned in Europe and California due to links to cancer, hormonal disruption, and fetal development issues—are still allowed in New York State. This legislation would ban all three of these dangerous additives.



Center for Community Alternatives Press Conference and Public Hearing on Safety of Persons in Custody, Transparency, and Accountability within State Correctional Facilities

This month, I stood alongside fellow legislators, advocates, and families of incarcerated individuals in support of the Community not Cages campaign which is a legislative package aimed at restoring fairness, compassion, and evidence based reform to our justice system. As a member of the Assembly committee on Corrections, I also participated in a joint public hearing on May 14 convened by the Assembly and Senate committees on Corrections, which focused on systemic safety issues, transparency, and accountability in New York prisons. The legislative package includes:

- [The Marvin Mayfield Act](#): This bill would eliminate mandatory minimum sentencing laws still on the books since the 1970s, restoring judicial discretion and allowing for individualized sentencing based on the facts of each case.
- [The Second Look Act](#): This bill would give people the opportunity to petition for resentencing after serving 10 years or half of their sentence, whichever is less, if they can show evidence of rehabilitation or that their sentence no longer reflects current laws or societal norms.
- [The Earned Time Act](#): This would expand eligibility for 'good time' and 'merit time' credits, allowing more incarcerated individuals to reduce their sentences through genuine efforts at rehabilitation. These incentives improve behavior and reduce recidivism.

The May 14 hearing was called in response to multiple preventable deaths in state prisons, Robert Brooks this past December and Messiah Nantwi in March, as well as the [deaths of at least seven incarcerated individuals](#) during the course of the correction officers strike this winter. Witnesses included the Commissioner of the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, independent oversight organizations such as the Corrections Association of NY, and advocacy groups. The testimony highlighted ongoing abuse, chronic understaffing, lack of healthcare access, especially for pregnant [incarcerated individuals](#) and a broader culture of neglect and violence in correctional facilities. You can watch the entire proceedings [here](#).



Standing with Federal Workers

I joined federal workers, researchers, and advocates in a Day of Action to speak out against the irrational terminations caused by the “DOGE cuts”, decisions made under the Trump administration and Elon Musk that are stripping federally funded research across the country.

Here in our district, the impacts are already being felt. Cornell University, an institution that’s both an Ivy League school *and* New York’s land-grant university, has received stop-work orders on over 90 research grants. These aren’t niche projects. They’re efforts aimed at strengthening our military, advancing cancer treatment, protecting our food supply, and helping New York farmers adapt to climate change.

Just a few examples of projects that have lost funding to date include:

- work on a miniature heart-assist pump for infants, toddlers, and young adults with congenital and acquired heart disease, who have a high rate of fatality;

- development of a combination of targeted radiation therapies in immunotherapy, to help the immune system recognize and destroy tumors that were previously hidden from detection in patients with prostate cancer;
- research on Optimizing the development of a tumor-targeting radiotherapy in patients with prostate cancer, with the goal of overcoming this immune system suppression and helping tumors self-destruct;
- targeting a radioactive nanoparticle to a protein in the brain that causes inflammation, to reduce brain swelling and reverse immune suppression in patients with cancer that has metastasized to the brain;
- a new clinical trial combining hormone therapy and immunotherapy to test a more effective treatment for newly diagnosed breast cancer; and
- an investigation of whether a lack of dietary folate causes genetic mutations that lead to lung cancer - highlighting how a simple intervention like folate supplementation might slow cancer growth and prevent spreading.



Protecting Survivors, Not Prosecuting Them

Earlier this month, I spoke at a press conference about one of my priority bills this session: the Sex Worker Immunity Act ([A1029/S3967A](#)). This bill ensures that individuals engaged in sex work who are victims of, or witnesses to, a crime can report that crime to law enforcement — or seek medical care — without fear of being prosecuted for prostitution.

It's a simple concept with serious implications. Right now, people are staying silent after witnessing or experiencing violent crimes because they're afraid they'll be arrested. That silence puts them — and others — in greater danger. This bill is modeled after New York's "Good Samaritan" law, which protects people who seek help during drug overdoses.

We've seen the tragic consequences of a system that punishes people instead of protecting them. This bill is a step toward ensuring that no one has to choose between their safety and their freedom. [You can watch my comments here and here.](#)

Sustainable Housing and Sprawl Prevention

On Wednesday, April 23rd Senator Rachel May and I hosted a virtual legislative briefing on the Sustainable Housing & Sprawl Prevention Act ([A6283/S3492](#)).

New York's environmental review regulations (SEQR) are designed to prevent harmful environmental impacts. However, too often with affordable housing projects, these regulations are used to slow walk or terminate projects. On average, navigating SEQR adds two years to the project deadline which can increase costs, push developments to the outskirts of communities and unintentionally develop patterns of sprawl. Sprawl is the spread of low-density development farther from community centers, increasing car dependence and infrastructure costs. This drives up greenhouse gas emissions and overall living costs for low-income households. The Sustainable Housing and Sprawl Prevention Act would streamline the SEQR process for dense, infill housing projects while preserving strong environmental protections making it easier to build affordable housing in already developed areas. [You can watch the entirety of the webinar here.](#)

Around the District



Youth Leading the Way on Climate Change

I had the opportunity to moderate a youth climate panel as part of *Climate Health is Public Health: A Night at the Museum* at the Museum of the Earth in Ithaca on April 30th. The event, hosted by the NYSPHA Climate Committee and Cornell Public Health, brought together public health professionals, educators, and local high school students for an evening of learning, reflection, and community.

The panel featured five incredible student leaders from Ithaca-area high schools who shared their insights on the climate crisis and what meaningful action looks like at their age. When asked about what keeps them feeling hopeful as well as what they'd like us to see to keep us hopeful, the overwhelming response was about the future generation. Each of the panelists work with kids in different capacities such as teaching dance, classes at Circus Culture and serving as summer camp counselors. The panelists remarked about the amazing curiosity of those younger than them. "They want to learn so much and they're incredibly perceptive - they want to learn how the planet works and they ask meaningful questions and it's inspiring to think that the next generation will be even bigger climate advocates," one said.

This conversation was a nice reminder that climate action isn't just about policy or technology. It's also about listening, learning, and supporting the next generation of changemakers.

Community Resources

It's time to **GET REAL!**

Starting May 7, a **REAL ID** will be required to board domestic flights or enter certain federal buildings, unless you have a valid passport

If your New York State license does not have a star or flag on it, it is not REAL ID-compliant



You will need the following documentation

Proof of social security status, including:

- original, signed social security card
- W2 or 1099 with full social security number, or
- ineligibility letters issued within 30 days

Two documents providing NYS residency, such as:

- valid NYS ID
- bank statement
- utility bill, or
- pay stub displaying your current address

For more information, including additional proof of residency options, visit: dmv.ny.gov/driver-license/enhanced-or-real-id

As of May 7, US Citizens who want to fly domestically have to have either a passport, Enhanced License, or a NYS REAL ID. REAL IDs were created in response to a 2005 federal act that established minimum security standards for state-issued driver licenses. These IDs are required for domestic flight, but optional otherwise: Traditional NY IDs are acceptable for being licensed to drive, registering to vote, and applying for benefits. Non-Drivers can also apply for an Enhanced Photo Document Non-Driver ID. To learn more about REAL IDs and find out which document is right for you, visit the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles website [here](http://dmv.ny.gov).

In good health,



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