



Assembly Member

# Inez E. Dickens

**Reports to the People**

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## *My Neighbors,*

For the first time in a long time, I am eagerly looking forward to a legislative session with so much on the table for us to tackle. After witnessing states put forward and pass legislation that deteriorates the rights of women, the rights of minorities, the rights of the poor, the rights of voters, and the rights of parents, we are at a moment in time that will test whether the sins of the past are truly behind us.

It was placed upon our shoulders, the burden of forming a more perfect union through civil rights legislation to protect the vulnerable and the 'different' and ensure they too could be included in our great society. Our mission was to guarantee that all persons would have the opportunity to prove themselves and show others what they are capable of achieving. Now we know this is not the case.

It perplexes me to see parents fighting their schools boards to not vaccinate or mask their children in the midst of a pandemic while also fighting to prevent teaching children about the role Black, Indigenous, People of Color have played in working to move our nation forward in time. It perplexes me to allow a person to vote for the representatives that truly represent their own interest

while creating a system that has the authority to remove their votes. It perplexes me to see a woman have the right to choose then seek to punish for the exercise of those choices. It perplexes me how we claim how beautiful this country is but we are willing to relax all environmental laws that protect our lands and waters from pollution for the sake of profit. Change is needed, and we are the ones we have been waiting for to do so.

Also, in a year in which the city used Ranked Choice Voting to select a new slate of City elected officials, we must assess how well the process worked, but more importantly how well these new electeds will work together, and if they choose to do so.

I support Mayor-elect Eric Adams' mission he has laid out. He wants to revamp a police department that has an enormous responsibility to keep the public safe while a good number of residents have very little to no faith in their ability to follow their own edict of Courtesy, Professionalism, and Respect. We need to get a hold on the way rents are skyrocketing, the cost of food, and the ability to get people back to work.

This year, my platform is still focused on the health and wellbeing

of our children and seniors, and will be expanded to how to effectively manage a return to the workforce while respecting people's personal choices regarding the vaccine. I will still encourage getting the jab, but I understand their hesitancy.

This year, my mission looks to expand the definition of environmental justice to include the placement of methadone clinics in communities where multiple services providers already exist. I will look to ask the state to invest in the research of fungi plastic degradation, the process by which certain mushrooms and bacteria digest on plastic which can help lower the level of pollution, particularly near our water ways.

We are racing toward a future which we are not fully prepared for, and time is short in refocusing our goals. We must get the city and state back to its pre-pandemic performance if we are to make the necessary investments in education for all, fair and equitable homeownership, and the promotion of BIPOC small businesses with greater access to city and state contracts. I ask that you continue to support me on these endeavors and let's fight together for a sustainable New York.

## HEALTH

**I**n our state's continuous effort to combat the pandemic's effect on our healthcare networks we have dedicated to the Department of Health \$96 billion, restored \$542 million to Medicaid programs to support nursing home resident-facing staffing services provided by registered nurses and certified nursing assistants, and we have provided additional funding for the Expanded In-home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP). We also, restored millions for school-based

health centers, and various mental health initiatives, including funding to create a new suicide prevention program for high-risk populations, including Latina adolescents, Black youth, members of the LGBTQ community and rural communities. It also includes support for programs and initiatives to address recent incidents of bias perpetuated upon Asian Americans.

The state is also providing \$50 million to Nourish NY to fight food insecurity and the Healthy

NY Program, which provides more affordable health insurance to small employers, uninsured working individuals and sole proprietors. We are maintaining the Lead Poisoning Prevention and Assistance Program, as well as support for treatment and prevention of opioid use disorder, including Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT). This will restore millions for the New York City Department of Education Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialist (SAPIS).

## SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

**A**dditional services the Assembly has committed to are an increase for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to reflect additional federal funding. This includes support for ending homelessness by establishing a statewide program which would provide supplements of no less than 85% of the Fair Market Rent (FMR) to individuals and families who are homeless or at imminent loss of housing. The Assembly also invested an additional \$1 million for naturally occurring retirement communities (NORC) and neighborhood naturally occurring retirement communities (NNORC) nursing services. NORC and NNORC programs coordinate health and social services to help older New Yorkers stay in their own homes.

## ENVIRONMENT

**S**ince the beginning of the pandemic, we have fought to get the virus under control, but we still need to work to protect and invest in the natural resources that the state and its families need. The budget advances an Environmental Bond Act – to be put in front of voters on the ballot in 2022 – to help reduce flood risks, protect shorelines and improve water quality.

While there is a statewide moratorium in place to prohibit companies from turning off electricity and other necessities, the Assembly strongly believes that protections must be in place for consumers – whether we are in a pandemic or not, so we decided to increase funding for the Public Utility Law Project (PULP)

Additionally, the pandemic has strained our food and agriculture systems and has encouraged us to invest in the state’s agriculture and food industries, while fostering agricultural and environmental stewardship with \$50 million in the Nourish NY program with food produced by New York farmers.

We also included a “Restore Mother Nature” environmental bond act, which will be on the ballot for voter approval in 2022, that invests in resilient infrastructure, open space conservation, water infrastructure, shoreline protection, and climate change mitigation projects, and Municipal Electric Vehicle Fast Chargers, fully funded by the state’s Superfund Program.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**P**rior to the pandemic New York was considered the financial capital of the world. During COVID, many of those institutions that carried out state’s economy have converted to alternative means of services for their clients and customers. This also means leaving our state for other regions of the country. As such, many local businesses that depended on the employees of these institutions for their livelihood have been unable to see the influx of income they were accustomed to. Now the state needs to step up and support our small businesses and their employees if we are to have a full recovery.

That is why we are creating a COVID-19 Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant to cover pandemic-related expenses to help local business owners get back on their feet and thrive. We have committed \$50 million for the COVID-19 Recovery Workforce Initiative for hardest-hit businesses including those owned by women, minorities and those who have been receiving unemployment benefits for an extended period.

The state now provides an Excluded Workers Fund for those who could not access unemployment, federal stimulus funds or other assistance programs. The Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) administers the program, providing grants and technical assistance to small businesses and microbusinesses of less than 10 employees that experienced economic hardship during the pandemic. Grants could be used to cover various business costs, including payroll, rent, mortgage, property and school taxes, insurance, utilities and pandemic-related expenditures that were necessary to protect the health and safety of workers and consumers. It also includes millions for a musical and theatrical production credit and an additional funding for the Arts Recovery Grant Program for not-for-profit arts and cultural organizations.

We also address the disturbing and unacceptable increase in discrimination against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders that we have seen since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Hate and

bigotry will never be tolerated in New York State.

The budget includes \$10 million in state funds for support programs and initiatives to address these recent incidents as well as federal funds to help with outreach to communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and communities hesitant to be vaccinated.

The final budget continues this critical support by providing rental assistance and mortgage relief to help more New Yorkers make ends meet. Further, the final budget includes initiatives to increase access to safe, affordable housing and combat the devastating issue of homelessness across the state. As we work to keep New Yorkers in their homes, we must also ensure that our families are safe in their communities.

Ensuring that the courts and criminal justice systems run smoothly and have the resources they need to implement our recent criminal justice reforms will both protect public safety and adequately prepare the state to respond to emergencies.

# LEGISLATION PASSED BY YOUR ASSEMBLY MEMBER

<b>A3757</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to digital blocking capability
<b>A3765</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Establishes conviction integrity units
<b>A3766</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Requires applicants for public assistance to be fully informed that they may be liable to reimburse the state for benefits received
<b>A3771</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Requires nursing homes that maintain a trust fund or funds into which residents' money is deposited to conduct quarterly audits and to report the findings of such audits to the commissioner of public health
<b>A3775</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Creates the New York city transit authority safety advisory panel to study and report on safety from terrorist acts
<b>A3778</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Establishes tenants' right to offset rental payments by the cost of certain emergency repairs
<b>A3789</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to furloughs of employees by certain public retirement systems
<b>A3795</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to determinations of appropriate educational programs for certain students in a school district in a city having a population of one million or more
<b>A3797</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Requires the state university of New York and the city university of New York to establish courses of study on ethnic studies, women's studies, and social justice
<b>A3802</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Regulates the use of human subjects for medical research and experimentation
<b>A3833</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Requires products containing glyphosate to have a warning label
<b>A3850</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Directs the commissioner of labor to establish the form and content for contracts for the employment of domestic workers
<b>A3853</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Prohibits the use of live human subjects as surgical subjects as part of state dental professional licensing examination
<b>A3866</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to language equality and acquisition for deaf children
<b>A3867</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Prevents genealogy firms from sharing genetic information of individuals with law enforcement without a signed waiver
<b>A3869</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Requires a public hearing for substantial change in transit authority service by the New York city transit authority
<b>A3872</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to the racial and ethnic makeup of the board of parole
<b>A3909</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Authorizes the issuance of a temporary retail permit by the state liquor authority to licensees located in a municipality having a population of one million or more persons
<b>A3924</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Requires public officers and bodies to provide interpreters and assistive listening devices for the hearing impaired at public hearings under certain conditions

<b>A3979</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Provides for the allocation of monies for dental health services in the medicaid managed care program, the child health insurance program and the family health plus program
<b>A4000</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Provides for funding for a sound basic education
<b>A4025</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to identity theft; clarifies personal identifying information and what acts constitute the offense of identity theft
<b>A4042</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Provides that in proceedings to review real property assessments in N.Y. city assessing method, capitalization rate, etc. must be disclosed
<b>A4062</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Authorizes guidelines for granting contracts to disabled veterans eligible under the home for heroes program
<b>A4068</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Prohibits the use of residential automatic pesticide misting systems
<b>A4103</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Provides for tuberculosis screenings outreach and services in epidemic areas and makes an appropriation therefor
<b>A4106</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Defines as aggravated harassment in the third degree photographing persons entering or leaving reproductive health care services facilities
<b>A4118</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Prohibits the erection or maintenance of billboards advertising alcoholic beverages within 1000 feet of schools or playgrounds
<b>A5453</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Authorizes the New York state department of financial services to oversee the planned closing of bank branch offices by federally chartered banking organizations
<b>A5794</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to election districts in certain counties
<b>A6049</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Requires school entrances to be locked during the school day
<b>A6407A</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Establishes the New York state small business protection program
<b>A6487</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Allows police officers to wear body-worn cameras, and prohibits agreements with other state or federal agencies that prevent the use of such cameras
<b>A6491</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to the "juvenile offender second chance act"
<b>A6493</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Requires the board of elections to provide email notifications to voters whenever they change the location of a polling place
<b>A6494</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to disclosure of certain employment statistics of state-assisted construction projects
<b>A6514</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to hate crimes
<b>A6521</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to eliminating rent increases for structures due to major capital improvements
<b>A6797</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to clarifying definitions of "illegal money transmission" and "money laundering"; and relates to penalties for unlicensed money transmitters
<b>A6948</b>	<b>Dickens</b> – Relates to excluding from state income tax unemployment benefits received during the COVID-19 pandemic

## TRANSPORTATION

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority is the lifeblood of our city. Prior to the pandemic our transit system moved almost 6 million people per day to work, school, events or necessary services. Since the pandemic residents have been reluctant to use public transportation which has increased vehicular traffic and pollution. Confidence in the system needs to be restored, so we restored \$236.1 million in operating assistance for the MTA, including funding that was withheld in 2020-21. To help continue combating climate change, the final budget provides for electric buses, and e-vehicle charging stations.

# EDUCATION & HIGHER EDUCATION

This year has been difficult for families and educators. Last spring, schools were forced to rapidly shift to remote learning which isn't as effective as in-person education, especially for students with special needs or individualized education plans. The technical challenges low-income students and students of color faces were dramatic, and the expectations placed upon them were unjust. The interpersonal skills young people develop through their interactions has taken a tremendous toll, with students feeling depressed, anxiety, and an overall sense of displacement.

The Assembly has made it an utmost priority to invest \$18 million in our school's mental health services and My Brother's Keeper program, which was started by President

Obama, to increase opportunities and eliminate barriers for young men of color.

The budget increases Foundation Aid by \$1.4 billion over last year's budget, increasing our overall state funding to New York schools and pre-kindergarten programs.

This budget finally tackles the "TAP gap" to increase the maximum Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) award by \$500 for a maximum award total of \$5,665, and we have increased our commitment for college opportunity programs. It also supports the Jose Peralta DREAM Act, provides funding for SUNY and CUNY schools, as well as private colleges for students impacted by COVID-19.

We Allocated \$8.2 billion of the Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief fund (ESSER) as part of President Biden's American Rescue Plan and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations

Act and requires school districts to spend the funding over multiple years and develop a plan as to how they are going to use the funding to help with reopening schools and mitigate learning loss, among other things. We included more in state funding for the 2021-22 school year to increase Universal Prekindergarten, restore funding to Teachers of Tomorrow program, Teacher Resource Centers, and Teacher-Mentor Intern programs.

The 2021-22 state budget provides \$15 million for a new digital inclusion program that would address the statewide digital equity gap with Grants to be provided to local governments, school districts, boards of cooperative educational services, not-for profits, libraries and other community-focused entities.

We restored aid to public libraries and increased funding for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the Langston Hughes Community Library.

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Winter 2021

SPANISH VERSION IS AVAILABLE

# CRIMINAL JUSTICE

As a result of the senseless deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others, we have fought for changes in criminal justice that were long overdue. As such, we are dedicating funding to support the prosecution and adjudication expenses related to the implementation of reforms to the process of discovery in criminal cases, municipal police body cameras and state police body cameras. We created a mandatory state certification process regarding the eligibility and training for all New York state police agencies and allow for the state Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to permanently invalidate the certification of any police officer removed from a police agency for cause. We empowered the DCJS to withhold or revoke the certification of any police agency that fails to adhere to mandatory statewide hiring and reporting practices.