



91st Assembly District
Larchmont - Mamaroneck - New Rochelle - Port Chester - Rye Brook and Rye

April 8, 2022

Dear Friends,

I share this legislative update from Albany where we are in the process of passing the final 2022-23 state budget. There is good news in this state budget on many fronts and there are also issues where more work is required. Additional detail will follow in future communications, but I want to share some highlights where I have devoted my advocacy and won some victories.

State Aid to Public Schools will include a record \$2.1 billion increase, including the second year of the three- year phase-in of full foundation aid funding, an issue I have played a leading role in for many years. Sound Shore school districts will benefit.

To address issues of affordability, a number of initiatives were included in the budget including the accelerated phase-in of the middle-class tax cut, enhancements to the Earned Income Tax Credit, improved child-care tax credit and suspension of the state share of the gasoline tax.

The budget includes a new \$500 million appropriation for New York's various clean water programs, including the Water Infrastructure Grant program I helped initiate in 2015, which generally receives the biggest share of the \$500 annual commitment we have maintained since 2017. That program helps local governments fund drinking water and wastewater projects. For a number of years,

I have advocated for a similar program to address stormwater project costs.

The \$4.2 environmental bond act includes an increased allotment to my proposal within the bond act to create a Stormwater Grant Program to help fund municipal stormwater projects. We were reminded during Hurricane Ida that our aging stormwater infrastructure system needs repair and expansion. The bond act, if passed, will include no less than \$250 million for these grants.

The Bond Act also includes \$500 million to help school districts fund the purchase of Electric Vehicle school buses. In February I co-chaired an Assembly hearing on the need to accelerate our system EV charging infrastructure. The budget includes a number of programs to grow EV charging options as car manufacturers are rapidly expanding their EV offerings.

The bond act and state budget included new commitments to address climate change, storm resilience and environmental protection issues, including a \$100 million increase in the Environmental Protection Fund.

I have been an advocate for small business relief and assistance during the pandemic. This budget includes assistance for Covid impacted businesses. In addition, a compromise was reached on the issue of the “to go” sale of alcoholic beverages by restaurants accompanied with the sale of food. I weighed in for an approach that balanced the business needs of restaurants with the very understandable concern of liquor stores and package stores that the “to go” rules do not harm those retail businesses.

The state budget includes increased funding for 4201 schools who serve students who are deaf, blind and/or severely physically disabled. I have been an advocate for these schools for many years and for funding support for New York School for the Deaf based in Westchester. We also have an agreement for an 11% increase

in funding formulas for special act school districts serving a variety of students with different needs. Those schools exist on very tight budgets and need additional support to achieve their mission.

Governor Hochul's first budget proposal came with a different approach from prior governors going back decades. Rather than cutting many popular programs as a bargaining chip with the legislature going into budget negotiations, her January budget proposal included many items all would agree upon. This was certainly the case with her school aid proposal. This refreshing approach allowed the budget process to focus on more difficult budgetary choices and some policy issues that made their way into the budget.

In upcoming updates I will provide more details regarding the successes and disappointments found in any budget and specifics regarding some policy issues on criminal justice, open meetings law, wetlands and other issues addressed within the budget. I will share details with continued good news for local governments, the digital inclusion work I have championed and many of the housing and human service issues included in the budget we will adopt tonight.

As always, please contact me on any issue on which I can be of assistance at 914-939-7028.

Warm regards,





Legislation that I sponsored (A.6906) that requires landlords to mitigate damages when commercial tenants vacate premises in violation of the terms of the lease, has passed the Assembly. In passing this legislation, New York State has restored the duty of landlords to mitigate damages when a tenant vacates before the end of a lease term for residential units. This public policy decision is based on the long-standing principle of the duty of a plaintiff to minimize damages. This sound principle, now applied to residential units, is also good public policy to protect commercial tenants from property owners who make no effort to re-rent a vacant property or minimize damages. Currently, it is common for commercial leases to include such a provision. This legislation would extend the state policy to commercial landlords and tenants on a uniform basis.

Another piece of legislation I sponsored also passed the Assembly ([A.7541](#)) and requires that the of emergency response plans that are required to be

submitted to the public service commission by electric corporations include details of staffing, equipment, and ability to perform toward certain restoration standards.

In 2013 the Governor and Legislature enacted strong measures in the public service law to improve planning and oversight of storm preparedness and response for electrical utility corporations. In 2019 the PSC issued a report in response to failures in utility company storm preparedness and response in 2018. In addition to directives and recommendations in that report the PSC also upgraded storm preparedness regulatory requirements for utilities after the 2018 storms.

This legislation builds upon those initiatives by connecting the emergency response planning process with time restoration goals to be established by the Public Service Commission. It will help utilities achieve the goal of "reasonably prompt restoration of service" already outlined in the existing statute by encouraging the emergency response plans to ensure the utilities emergency plans include resources, staffing and an ability to restore within a reasonable timetable.

Prior to and after Superstorm Sandy, outage periods have grown as utility companies become more dependent on mutual aid from other parts of the country instead of maintaining the practice of having sufficient local resources and manpower to address these emergencies. Emergency response plans acknowledge this and strike a balance between the arrival of mutual aid and a utility corporation's responsibility to have local resources and staffing available to restore service within a reasonable period of time after a major storm event. Incorporating time-based restoration goals will help in achieving reasonably prompt restoration of service.

Mamaroneck Vigil for Ukraine

On March 20th I participated in a Peace Vigil for Ukraine in Mamaroneck. What has become evident in this crisis is that Ukraine's success is our success as they are showing the world the importance of defending and fighting for democracy.

Below is a video of my remarks.



Help for Ukraine

[International Rescue Committee](#) , [World Central Kitchen](#) , [Save the Children](#),
[International Committee For the Red Cross](#), [UNICEF USA](#), [UN Refugee Agency](#), [Volunteer NY](#)

Governor Hochul Warns Consumers About Scams and Cybersecurity Threats amid Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Governor Hochul advised New Yorkers about charity scams and increased cyber security threats related to Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. The New York State

Division of Consumer Protection has learned of fraudulent requests for charitable relief money to support victims of the war. Consumers are encouraged to carefully evaluate any request for money and verify charities prior to donating money or supplies. Governor Hochul also encourages New Yorkers to remain on guard when releasing sensitive information online amid an uptick in cyber security threats through the utilization of security recommendations from the Department of Taxation and Finance. This follows the Governor's formation of the [Joint Security Operations Center](#), which serves as the center for joint local, state and federal cyber efforts.

Scammers often make contact via social media, unsolicited emails, phone calls, or text messages. They may ask to send money through a payment app like Cash App, Venmo or Zelle, wire the money to an offshore bank account, or send prepaid gift cards. Many recent scams include requests for donations in cryptocurrency, such as Bitcoin or Ethereum. Scam artists are creative and will continue to think of new ways to defraud people, so consumers must always be vigilant.

The Federal Trade Commission recommends checking with [give.org](#), [charitynavigator.org](#), [charitywatch.org](#), or [candid.org](#) to see reports and ratings for charities.

Governor Hochul Announces New York as Top Community Solar Market in the United States

Governor Kathy Hochul announced New York has become the top community solar market in the United States with more than one gigawatt of community solar installed and operational – enough to serve 209,000 homes across the state. New York also has the largest pipeline in the nation with enough community solar under

construction to serve an additional 401,000 homes, ensuring continued access to clean affordable solar for all New Yorkers for years to come. Today's announcement accelerates progress towards meeting the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act) goal to generate 70 percent of the state's electricity from renewable sources by 2030 and the governor's goal to achieve 10 gigawatts of solar by 2030.

Community solar enables access to solar for homeowners, renters, and business owners who may not have ideal conditions to directly install solar panels onsite. Through this arrangement, clean energy is still delivered by a customer's regular electric providers, and the power produced from the solar array is fed directly back into the electric grid. As the electric grid is supplied with clean, renewable energy, subscribers receive a credit on their electric bills for their portion of the solar system's output.

Community solar made up 70 percent of total solar installations across the state in 2021. In addition, New York's distributed solar pipeline is now comprised of more than 708 of these projects totaling 2,300 megawatts, which once completed will help expand access to clean energy for all New Yorkers, including low-to-moderate income (LMI) households and those living in [disadvantaged communities](#) (DACs).

