

Assemblymember
Tony Simone

Assembly District 75



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Dear Friends,

Happy Spring! I'm up in Albany, working hard on the state budget. With the deadline approaching, I wanted to take a moment to update you on some of my recent work.

My community office is always here to help you. My team can be contacted at 212-807-7900 or by emailing SimoneT@nyassembly.gov

Together we can create a better New York for everyone!

-Tony

Protecting Retail Workers

The increase in larceny cases in New York City and around the state has hit independent supermarkets, bodegas, grocers, and mom & pop retail shops hard. That is why they formed the Collective Action to Protect Our Stores (CAPS), which represents over 10,000 businesses. Organized theft and repeat offenders are pervasive and impact the safety of the worker and the community, besides hurting the livelihoods of the workers and store owners.



To draw attention to the problem, CAPS held a press conference on March 21. Hundreds of CAPS members and advocates joined with elected officials in the State Capitol Building.

The press conference was in support of legislative initiatives, especially three bills (that I co-sponsor) to address theft and violence against retailers:

- The Retail Workers Protection Act ([A.5260A, De Los Santos/S.5479, Hoylman-Sigal](#)), would make it a Class D felony to assault a retail worker. The list of currently protected workers, includes nurses, livery drivers, and police officers.
- [S.1644 Hoylman-Sigal/A.1504, Rosenthal](#) creates the offense of fostering the sale of stolen goods

- [S.4448 Thomas/A.4121 Dinowitz](#) which would raise a repeat larceny offense within two years to grand larceny in the fourth degree

[See here for a video where I speak on the importance of protecting out retail stores.](#)

Update on Penn Station

The community and its elected officials (including me) have long opposed the plan that called for several huge office towers to fund the expansion and improvement of Penn Station. Luckily, the Governor has recently scrapped that plan.

In my recent [op-ed in the Daily News](#), I called for a new strategy to pay for a new Penn Station. The state should continue with the improvements happening now by maintaining the flow of state funds. We in the Legislature could then authorize bonds to pay for the work without relying on future property tax revenue from new development. By taking those steps, the state will position itself to tap into federal infrastructure dollars that could cover up to 80% of the total project costs.

Last century, our leaders failed us when they destroyed the great former Penn Station and left us with something far less grand and far less fair to New Yorkers. This is the moment to fix that mistake, not repeat it.

[Read the full op-ed here:](#)

A screenshot of a web page from the Daily News. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the "DAILY NEWS" logo, a yellow button that says "\$1/6 MNTHS Ends Soon", and a black "LOG IN" button. Below this is a dark blue banner with the text "TRIAL OFFER | 6 months for \$1". The main content area is titled "OPINION" in blue. The article title is "The Penn rehab plan is dead, bring it back to life" in large, bold black font. Below the title, it says "By Tony Simone", "New York Daily News", and "Mar 03, 2023 at 2:30 am".

Following that, I joined Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal and advocates outside of a State Senate hearing on the Penn Station project that wasn't even attended by Empire State Development, the agency overseeing the whole plan.

This week, the New York Times [previewed what an alternative proposal may look like](#). While there are many details of this plan still unclear and many questions to be answered, one thing is clear, we have moved the conversation away from the old Cuomo real estate plan and are heading towards a conversation focused on the actual station!

I'm ready and eager to work with the Governor, the community, and my colleagues in government on a new plan that works for our community and delivers the transportation infrastructure upgrade we desperately need.

My Inauguration

On March 4, we filled the Fulton Community Center with friends, neighbors and colleagues for my inauguration ceremony. It was such an honor to be sworn in by Attorney General Tish James and be introduced by leaders like Senator Chuck Schumer, Comptroller Tom DiNapoli, Speaker Carl Heastie,

Congressman Jerry Nadler, Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal, Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine, Councilmember Erik Bottcher and my predecessor, Dick Gottfried.

It was an exciting way to celebrate the work we have accomplished so far and set our sights on working together on the great challenges we have ahead of us.

[Watch the highlights of my inauguration ceremony here](#)



Here I am affirming my oath of office with Attorney General Tish James while my husband, Jason Coughlin, holds the United States Constitution for me to place my hand.

The Assembly's Forward-Thinking Budget Proposal

The Assembly's budget proposal offers a smart, innovative, fiscally responsible blueprint. **It rejects the payroll mobility tax and MTA fare hikes, fully funds our schools, expands access to child care, makes it easier and more affordable to go to college, tackles climate change with a bold new all-electric building plan, helps tenants and homeowners, cracks down on gun violence, supports raising the minimum wage and puts families first in everything we do.** With the budget deadline quickly approaching at the end of the month, we will continue working closely with Governor Hochul and our colleagues in the Senate to pass a state budget that New Yorkers can be proud of.

This plan must keep our communities safe, hold families' costs down, create good-paying jobs and ensure that our children receive a world-class education from UPK to college graduation day. That's how we deliver for New York families and ensure that the Empire State remains a national model for effective progressive governance.

Some of the highlights I'm most proud of in our budget proposal are:

- Provides \$280 million in funding to make **school meals free for all students** in New York State
- Extends the supplemental Child Tax Credit enacted in last year's budget for one year for \$287 million in savings
- Includes a **\$3 billion increase in school aid**, including \$2.6 billion to fully fund Foundation Aid for the first time since the formula was created in 2007
- Provides an additional \$75 million for the Statewide Universal Full Day Prekindergarten grant, for a total of \$200 million in new funding in 2023-24
- Restores and **increases funding for libraries** to \$104.6 million, an increase of \$5 million
- Provides \$1.5 billion to assist tenants with arrears and homeowner assistance
- Provides \$196.9 million to **eliminate the proposed 5.5 percent MTA fare increase**
- Provides \$50 million for a zero-fare bus route pilot program, including two free bus routes in each borough, one serving a low-income community and one serving a commercial district
- Supports **increasing the minimum wage** for workers throughout the state and indexation of the minimum wage; acknowledges the need for a proportional increase for tip workers; and affirms commitment to ensuring that the wage rate for home care workers continues to rise jointly with the statewide minimum wage and should not be diminished by any future increases of the minimum wage
- Increases the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) to 8.5% for human services providers
- \$641.2 million for mental hygiene agency workers \$18.3 million for elder care workers

- \$11.5 million for foster care workers
- Provides \$15 million for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, connecting residents at long-term care facilities with advocates for their rights and wellbeing
- Provides **\$1 million for nursing services at Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs)** and Neighborhood NORCs
- Provides \$890 million in capital funding to create 3,500 new residential units for New Yorkers with mental health disorders
- Provides **\$60 million to create 12 Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Programs (CPEPs)** across the state
- Provides \$18 million in capital funds to help establish 150 new state-operated in-patient psychiatric beds and \$15 million to open the beds, while ensuring that a portion of the new beds will be for children
- Provides **\$15 million to develop housing support for individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD)**
- Provides \$1 million for the Disability Advocacy Program (DAP), granting legal representation to disabled New Yorkers whose federal benefits were denied or discontinued
- Creates a Child Care Creation and Expansion Tax Credit to incentivize businesses to help their employees access child care
- Provides \$5 million to hire mental health professionals at New York's 12 Addiction Treatment Centers (ATCs), ensuring adequate services for people with co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders
- Provides **\$435 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)**, an additional \$35 million over the executive's proposal
- Allocates **\$600 million for clean water infrastructure**, an increase of \$100 million over the executive's proposal

Working for People with Disabilities

First Bill Signed into Law by Governor

Earlier this month, I had my first bill signed into law! And it passed unanimously! [A.2890/S.823](#) will advance disability justice by requiring the NY State Office of People with Developmental Disabilities to process applications for determining eligibility and service authorizations in an effective and timely manner.

Over 120,000 New Yorkers are served by OPWDD. I hear from them all the time in our district. The difficulties they face navigating our society are burdensome enough. Ensuring accountability in the system that is meant to serve them by preventing delays in eligibility determinations and service authorizations, is crucial and I'm glad I could deliver this much needed change.

[Watch the bill be passed here](#)

Supporting the Arts

Our district is home to Broadway, Times Square, and countless theater, dance, and arts companies and organizations. The arts are a massive economic driver in New York, and are the beating heart of my district. I joined a rally in Albany against proposed budget cuts for the New York State Council on the Arts. NYSCA provides funding to large and small artists and organizations, making it possible for art to be accessible to everyone and for artists to live and work in our city. We should be giving more support to the arts, not less, and my colleagues and I in the Assembly are fighting to keep this important funding in this year's budget.

[Read more about the issue here.](#)



TONIGHT: CB4 Cannabis Forum

**CANNABIS LICENSING
&
ENFORCEMENT FORUM**

Sponsored by Manhattan Community Board 4's
(MCB4)
Cannabis Working Group

March 30th 6pm-8pm

Virtual forum with a presentation by the Office of Cannabis Management, followed by a panel of relevant city agencies and community stakeholders, and Q&A session.



Register

Please contact District Manager Jesse Bodine
(jbodine@cb.nyc.gov) with any questions.

Community Board 4's Cannabis Working Group will host a virtual forum on cannabis licensing and enforcement with a presentation from the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) followed by a panel of city agencies and community stakeholders and a Q&A session. The forum will begin at 6PM and end at 8PM. If you'd like to listen, comment, or ask questions, you can register here: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_JSctPCvAS4S1SaHEbhg1bg