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May 7, 2021

Dear Friends,

In New York and around the country, additional steps are being taken to open up more activities while still following CDC guidelines.

Indoor dining in NYC, hair salons, barber shops and other personal care services will expand to 75 percent capacity as of May 7th. Gyms and fitness centers can expand to 50 percent capacity beginning May 15th.

Beginning May 19, large-scale outdoor event venues such as Yankee Stadium and Citifield will welcome more people and only be limited by the capacity necessary to comply with the CDC social distancing rules. This applies to outdoor music concerts, live entertainment, baseball games, horse races and more. Fully vaccinated attendees at these events may be seated at full capacity in assigned sections.

Broadway theaters are ready to reopen at 100% capacity beginning September 14. Starting now, tickets will go on sale for many shows.

Live entertainment, theater, sporting events, small live venues and arts institutions were all shutdown during the pandemic. Those venues and the countless businesses that benefit from their activity need the rebound that safe reopening will bring. Please try and support these venues, as well as the local restaurants and merchants whose businesses have been a fraction of what they had been in a full economy.

The application process for the state grants and other assistance that we included in the state budget to assist these businesses will be announced in a few weeks. Increased commerce is an important part of bringing them all back.

As always, if I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at 914-939-7028.

Warm regards,

Steve



Last week I joined state and local leaders in New Rochelle to celebrate a groundbreaking for Heritage Park. The project is a \$1.1 million public playground and park and supports the economic development efforts underway in New Rochelle as part of the city's selection as a winner of the \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative for the Mid-Hudson Region.



As we have since the beginning of the Covid-19 crisis, my staff and I have been assisting constituents with unemployment insurance cases before the New York State Department of Labor. Last year DOL increased staffing and retooled software to address the historic increase in claims during the pandemic. In recent weeks delays have again surfaced, and we are trying to help DOL move cases along.

There are two major causes of unemployment claim delays. There is a renewal process that takes place each year that is a little more time consuming and there has been a big increase in fraudulent claims made by hackers and cybercriminals intending to exploit the system.

The New York State Department of Labor has announced that it has identified over 1.1 million fraudulent unemployment benefit claims during the COVID-19 pandemic, preventing fraudsters from stealing more than \$12.3 billion in benefits. The NYS DOL continues to work aggressively to identify and prevent unemployment compensation fraud and continues to partner with law enforcement on the federal, state, and local level, including the US DOL Office of Inspector General, the Secret Service, and the FBI, to hold fraudsters accountable.

The NYS DOL is also warning New Yorkers to remain vigilant and only respond to official communications sent by the New York State Department of Labor. The alert comes in the wake of widespread reports of fraudsters using fake communications such as phishing texts and emails seeking personal information from claimants presumably, in many instances, to file fraudulent unemployment compensation claims or for other nefarious purposes.

How to Report Fraud

If New Yorkers receive an official communication from the NYS DOL regarding unemployment benefits that they did not apply for, they may be a victim of fraud and identity theft. Official communication includes, but is not limited to, emails, text messages, letters, debit cards, and tax forms received in the mail. They should immediately report suspected UI fraud to the NYS DOL at on.ny.gov/ui/fraud, and suspected identity theft to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at identitytheft.gov. After reporting suspected fraud through the NYS DOL's online form, individuals will receive an email confirmation that the NYS DOL has received the report. The NYS DOL will only call the individual if our Office of Special Investigations needs more information about the reported fraud.

Legislative Updates

Assembly Passes Legislation to Extend Residential & Commercial Eviction Moratoriums

The Legislature has passed, and the Governor has signed, legislation to extend the residential and commercial eviction and foreclosure moratoriums, and expand the number of small businesses eligible for the hardship declarations.

The COVID-19 Emergency Eviction and Foreclosure Protection Act of 2020, which passed in December of last year, helped tenants and homeowners who were struggling financially due to the COVID-19 pandemic to stay in their homes by allowing them to submit hardship declarations. Similarly, the COVID-19 Emergency Protect Our Small Business Act of 2021 put a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures for small businesses of less than 50 employees. The new extender legislation provides tax lien and tax foreclosure protections, as well as protections against negative credit reporting.

In another piece of legislation, that I co-sponsored, we also expanded the COVID-19 Emergency Protect Our Small Business Act of 2021 to small businesses with up to 100 employees, or up to 500 employees if the business was shut down by executive order or health department directive for at least a two week period between May 15, 2020 and May 1, 2021 (A.2122). This measure has passed both houses and is awaiting consideration by the Governor. The original bill, passed in January, allowed small businesses of up to 50 employees to submit such hardship declarations.

Safe Staffing Bills Pass Legislature

Lifesaving Legislation to Require Safe Staffing Standards in Hospitals and Nursing Homes

The legislature passed two safe staffing bills to ensure adequate nurse staffing in hospitals and nursing homes (A.1088 and A.2119). For decades, nurses, patients and their families, and legislators have fought for passage of a safe staffing law. Covid-19 has made this long-standing need even more clear and compelling, as shown in reports by Attorney General Tish James and the U.S. Public Interest Research Group.



Empire State Development Announces Applications Available For The New York Entertainment Workforce Diversity Grant Program

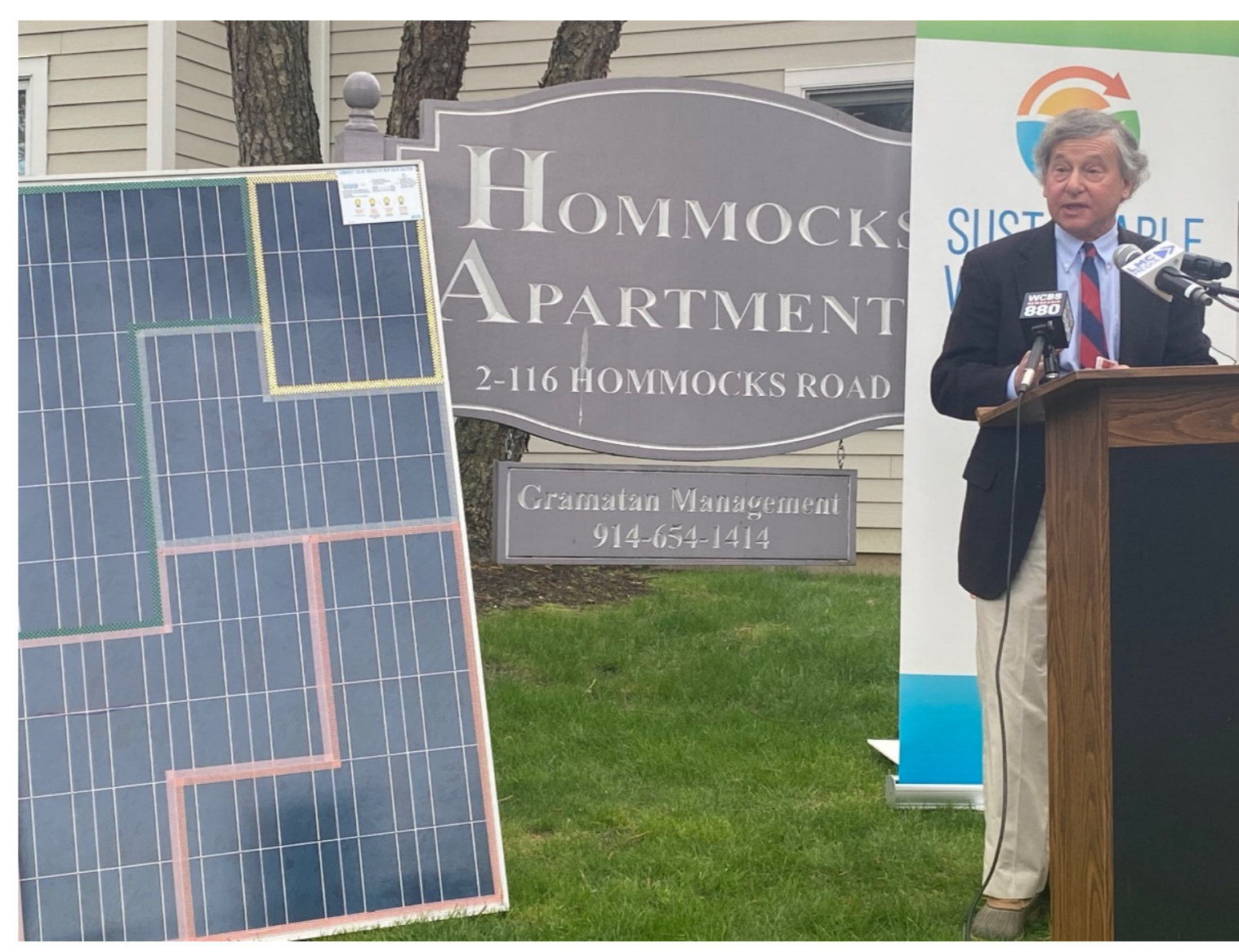
- Provides Over \$1 Million Annually for Job Creation and Training Programs that Support a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce in the Motion Picture and Television Production and Post-Production Industries
Eligible Training Programs May Receive Up to \$500,000
Virtual Information Session will be held on May 20th at 1pm. Register here.
More information on this program can be found HERE

Other NYS Funding Opportunities:

- Empire Pandemic Response Reimbursement Fund program is accepting applications to support essential workers and first responders. The program, coordinated by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, is designed to reimburse out-of-pocket child or dependent care, transportation, lodging and other qualifying expenses that eligible workers incurred while employed in New York State between March 1, 2020, through the date of application submission. Up to \$1,000 is available per household. The funding comes from private donations from individuals, charitable trusts and businesses made during the COVID crisis.
NY Forward Loan Fund (NYFLF) provides flexible and affordable loans to help small businesses, not-for-profits, and small residential landlords.
New York State Small Business Development Center List of pandemic-relief micro-grant and micro-loan programs
\$4.1 million in Environmental Justice Community Impact Grants is available to help communities historically and disproportionately impacted by pollution address environmental concerns. More information available here. The deadline for applications is July 1st at 3 p.m. For a complete list of guidelines and more information, contact DEC's Office of Environmental Justice at 518-402-2600, through email here, or online here.
\$25 million Real Time Energy Management + Tenants Program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing energy efficiency in commercial spaces as office and building capacity begin to increase during the COVID-19 economic recovery. The program is open through 2024 with applications being accepted on a rolling basis while funding is available.
ESD COVID-19 Business Resources
NYS Council on the Arts (NYSICA) COVID-19 Relief Funds and Business Support
Pursuit Lending COVID-19 Resources for Businesses
NYSERDA
Clean Energy Communities
Energy Programs and Incentives

Additional Federal Resources:

- Summary of Federal Resources - includes funding options, tax credits and tax filing help, contracting assistance and more
Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)
COVID-19 Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL)
Shuttered Venue Operators Grant
Restaurant Revitalization Fund
The Internal Revenue Service posted a fact sheet to educate employers on how to claim the paid sick leave credit on their quarterly tax filings.



I was excited to join local leaders in the Town of Mamaroneck to announce the Hommocks Park Community Solar program now available to Town of Mamaroneck residents in affordable housing and those with low and moderate income. Thanks to the efforts of the Town and Sustainable Westchester, solar panels installed above the Hommocks ice rink will generate power to allow approximately 150 households to lower their electricity bill while using sustainable energy and helping reduce the community's carbon footprint.

The state has set high standards for reducing carbon emissions that will only be attained through government, private, individual and community efforts such as this one. Town of Mamaroneck officials, staff and volunteers were at the center of this effort. Sustainable Westchester played a key role. Congratulations to all for a great project that is a great example for other communities across the state.

To join the Hommocks Community Solar project please visit: https://account.powermarket.io/hommocks.html or call: 914-242-4725 ext. 112 (para español use ext. 105). For more information and to see if you can participate in a community solar program, visit: https://sustainablewestchester.org/solar/#benefits



NY State Covid-19 Vaccine Appointments Am I Eligible

or by calling NYS Vaccination Hotline: 1-833-NYS-4-VAX (1-833-697-4829).



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