



Dear Neighbors,

I want to begin by wishing you all a Happy New Year! I hope that you all had a safe and restful holiday and were able to feel some peace despite the ongoing stress of this pandemic. I am sharing a photo of my first day on the floor of New York State Assembly Chamber, January 6, 2021, a day I will always remember as both the beginning of my journey as your representative in Albany, but also because just a few hours after this photo was taken we all watched in horror as an insurrection unfolded in our Capitol against our democracy. I want to take some space here today to honor everyone who defended the U.S. Capitol and our democracy a year ago. We must keep working together to uphold the principles we all hold so dear in our hearts.



The State of the State and the Start of the 2022 Legislative Session

Thank you to Joe Salzone at WHCU for hosting me this morning. We discussed the Governor's State of the State address and my legislative priorities for the 2022 session. My team and I have been working hard to put together a really exciting package of bills. [Please listen here!](#)

Yesterday, Governor Kathy Hochul returned to the New York Assembly Chamber to deliver her State of the State Address in the People's House. This was a fitting setting for our Governor to emphasize her vision and commitment to shifting from a previous culture of power struggles and competition to one of good government

based on collaboration and effective teamwork to solve the core issues underlying the struggles faced by all New Yorkers.

The governor outlined a plan to regrow and stabilize our healthcare workforce that has been so severely overburdened during this epidemic and to invest in measures that will encourage all New Yorkers to play their part in helping to reduce the spread in COVID. The Governor recognized the real struggles that low and middle-income individuals and families as well as small businesses are facing and committed to both meaningful tax relief and financial aid to small businesses. She importantly acknowledged the need to address many of the root public health factors associated with crime, including unstable housing and homelessness, mental-health and substance use disorders. She committed to invest in these issues and create the infrastructure needed to address both present and future crime and create a safe and thriving environment for all New Yorkers. The Governor also identified several existing and new financial support programs for farmers and committed to increasing their funding. She also committed to significant investments in both childcare and our state's higher education system to make NY a leader in the country and ready to provide workforce training to a growing number of students to meet the workforce demands in the state.

In the coming weeks and months, I look forward to working with Governor Hochul and my colleagues in the Assembly and the Senate to pass a budget and legislation that are bold and truly transformative so that we can ensure we recover from this pandemic stronger than ever.

COVID-19 News & Resources

The pandemic landscape is shifting rapidly as the Omicron variant spreads across New York. Many of your questions and concerns are addressed in the Town Hall hosted by the Tompkins County Health Department this week. Please watch here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GrjQwOG6Rw>

Vaccine Safety for Children

I wanted to share two new studies released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that underscore the importance of vaccinating children against coronavirus.

Here are the two key takeaways:

- Serious health problems among children who received the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine were extremely rare ([study](#))
- Nearly all children hospitalized with serious Covid illness were not fully vaccinated ([study](#))

[Read more here.](#)

My staff and I also found this video with Dr. Sallie Permar, chair of the Department of Pediatrics and Dr. Jay K. Varma, professor in the Department of Population Health Sciences at Weill Cornell Medicine enormously helpful. We hope it will help answer question and ease worries for those of you who with children in the 5-11 age group who are not yet vaccinated. To cite just one example, we were relieved to learn how rare it is for children in the 5-11 age group to experience side effects.

[Watch here](#)

A dark blue rectangular graphic with the words "Community Resources" written in a large, yellow, serif font, centered within the rectangle.

Community Resources

Property Circuit Breaker Program

Relief for overburdened homeowners is here! The new property tax circuit breaker program helps middle-class families keep more of their hard-earned money and will save taxpayers more than \$400 million dollars. To qualify for this new program, homeowners must have resided at their current address for at least six months, earn less than \$250,000, be enrolled in or qualify for the STAR program and spend more than 6% of their income on property taxes. The credit will be available when you file your 2021 taxes.

The Assembly Majority is helping working families keep more of their hard-earned dollars.

New property tax circuit breaker program saves eligible homeowners up to \$350 per year.

The New York State Homeowner Assistance Fund (NYS HAF)

The [New York State Homeowner Assistance Fund \(NYS HAF\)](#) is a federally funded program dedicated to assisting homeowners who are at risk of default, foreclosure or displacement as a result of financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who can apply?

- Homeowners who are behind or in forbearance on their mortgage
- Homeowners who are in default on a reverse mortgage
- Homeowners who are behind on their property taxes, water or sewage bills
- Homeowners who are behind on monthly maintenance charges

Applications will be accepted beginning **January 3**. This fund is expected to receive significantly more applications than can be funded by the program, so **please gather your materials now and plan to apply early**. For details and application guidelines, please visit this website: <https://www.nyhomeownerfund.org/>



Help for New York Homeowners Affected by COVID is Here



1-844-77-NYHAF
(1-844-776-9423)

Around the District

Senator Gillibrand Visits Cornell to Announce New Legislation

The COVID-19 global pandemic has underscored the critical nature of making investments in public health, particularly preparedness and response, so that we can plan and coordinate our response to emerging threats to our communities.

I was honored to welcome Senator Gillibrand to Cornell's Ithaca campus today and applaud her for [introducing legislation that will ensure we have strong pandemic preparedness and response in place for future pandemics](#). This legislation will fund Centers of Excellence to create research and communications hubs to increase our ability to swiftly respond to public health emergencies. Senator Gillibrand's legislation will provide critical support to Cornell's Center of Pandemic Preparedness and Response and makes a critical investment in science, bringing together the networks of government, academic research centers, and organizations that must work together to face current health threats and to understand and mitigate new threats as they emerge so that we can develop robust public health strategies.

Cornell University, with its state, federal, and global reach, is well poised to be a leader in pandemic preparedness and response. We are incredibly fortunate to have Cornell's **Center for Pandemic Prevention and Response** housed at the Weill School in NYC working in coordination with the College of Veterinary Medicine here in Ithaca, both of which have been on the forefront of COVID technology

and response. We are incredibly fortunate to have Cornell's sequencing lab here in Ithaca at the Vet School. Over the course of this pandemic, this lab has been a national and global leader in helping us to track new variants, understand the rate of infectiousness, and track how quickly variants take over as the dominant strain in communities.

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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