



May 1, 2023

Dear Neighbors,

It's hard to believe we are already in the month of May - this year has been flying by at warp speed! I've been bouncing back and forth between the District and Albany, speaking with constituents and attending community advocacy events between session days. As hectic as it can be, I am continually humbled and honored to do this work. Here is what I've been up to this past week:

### **New Visions Students**

I had the exciting opportunity to welcome young constituents to Albany last week as part of the TST BOCES New Visions program. New Visions is an honors program that empowers high school seniors, allowing them to immerse themselves and explore careers in engineering, medicine, and life sciences. After giving them a crash course on the legislative process, they joined me at a press conference and met with advocates. My advice for them: Always think up, always think bigger, always think of what effect you can make beyond your jurisdiction!



## **Speaking Against Lead in our Environment**

Last week I spoke in support of Assemblymember Glick's bill [A2084A](#), which would prohibit the use of lead ammunition on state lands. This bill is vital for the health of our wildlife, our environment, and ourselves.



## Remembering Marvin Mayfield

A month ago, we lost a truly beautiful human being, [Marvin Mayfield](#), the Organizing Director of the [Center for Community Alternatives](#). Last week, I joined hundreds of advocates to honor his legacy and to demand protection for bail reform and other changes to criminal justice that Marvin spent his life passionately fighting for.





# Legislative Update

## **Criminal Justice Reform Package**

A major issue that I prioritize in my work as a legislator is addressing the systemic problems and injustices in our criminal justice system. I am striving to pass a package of data-informed legislation that will improve the safety of our communities and law enforcement personnel, and bring about rehabilitative criminal justice measures that break cycles of crime, strengthen families and promote the physical and mental well-being of those who experience incarceration.

## **Earned Time Act ([A1128](#))**

Much of my work in criminal justice reform is in trying to reduce recidivism, or the tendency of a previously incarcerated individual to reoffend and be reincarcerated. The cycle of incarceration and recidivism weakens and breaks family connections and erodes community safety and stability. The Earned Time Act is an important key in breaking this damaging pattern by helping incarcerated people prepare for life after their sentence and more successfully reintegrate into society.

This bill strengthens good time and merit time laws, which were severely slashed in New York state in the 1990's. This will give incarcerated New Yorkers the opportunity to participate in educational and rehabilitation programs that encourage personal transformation and increase the amount of time an individual can earn off of their

sentence, incentivizing good behavior and helping them to reunite with their families sooner. This legislation fosters a safer work environment for correctional officers due to decreased levels of violence in correctional facilities.

An important provision of this bill is the protection against the abuse of discretion in taking away good time by corrections personnel. The bill would require the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to report annually regarding withheld, forfeited, or canceled time allowance credit. These reports will include necessary information to ensure that incarcerated individuals are not being subject to discrimination or undue punishment.

The effort to reduce recidivism is an effort towards healing and growth, for the individuals, their families and communities, and for the security and prosperity of our state. By allowing a convicted person the chance to use their time to develop skills and incentivizing personal growth, we can take a step toward the larger goal of shifting our criminal justice system from one of punishment to one of rehabilitation.

### **Prohibiting Participation in Torture and Improper Treatment of Incarcerated Individuals by Health Care Professionals ([A4863](#))**

An egregious and all-too-common violation of human rights that far too many incarcerated individuals endure while serving their sentences is being subject to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, often within the context of interrogation. This legislation would bar health care professionals from participating directly or indirectly in the torture or improper treatment of incarcerated persons and provide them with protections for refusing orders to participate in or comply with such abusive behavior. This legislation would also secure a patient's medical record confidentiality and add protection for whistleblowers reporting violations. Additionally, it would ensure that the definitions of "torture" and "improper treatment" are consistent with international, federal, and state law, as well as professional standards.

## **Exoneree Benefits and Entitlements - Amendment to Court of Claims Act ([A4867](#))**

This bill repeals and amends certain sections of the Court of Claims Act relating to claims for unjust conviction and imprisonment and the availability of certain benefits and entitlements to exonerees. This amendment includes the sealing of records, payment of awards and attorney's fees, enrollment in health benefit plans, and tuition awards at city or state universities of New York.

## **Cap on Bail ([A4874](#))**

This bill would remove the maximum authorized amount of money (\$2000) allowed to be deposited by charitable bail organizations. High bail rates disproportionately punish people in poverty, who are unable to return to their families and continue working as they await trial. Allowing charitable organizations to better help individuals post bail is a way to address this disparity.

## **Small Business Tax Credit ([A4951](#))**

Among the greatest challenges for recently incarcerated people trying to reenter society are the obstacles and social stigma they must overcome in finding employment. A lack of employment and financial security is a leading cause of recidivism, perpetuating the desperate circumstances that cause many to turn to crime. This bill would incentivize small businesses to create opportunities for those reentering society after incarceration to find economic stability with a \$1,500 tax credit for each previously convicted person employed.

## Medical Records ([A5902](#))

This bill amends the Correction Law and helps improve the welfare of incarcerated persons by developing a uniform electronic medical records system to be utilized by all correctional facilities in the state. Consistency in record-keeping is crucial to ensuring that incarcerated people's health needs are being met, especially as they are moved and transferred between facilities.

# Around the District

## Arbor Day

On Arbor Day, Friday April 28th, I joined the City of Ithaca and supportive community members for a celebratory tree planting. Alderperson Ducson Nguyen read the Arbor Day proclamation and I spoke about the great importance of trees in our fight against climate change, especially their incredible ability to capture and store carbon. I love how the Ithacan community celebrates and cares for its natural spaces, and I'd like to thank Jeanne Grace, City Forester of Ithaca, for organizing this beautiful gathering, as well as the hard working members of the Parks and Forestry division that keep this city beautiful and green.





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## **Cortland Child Care**

Last week I met with Cortland area child care providers. While there are items in the upcoming budget that give us reason to be optimistic, our area child care centers have not recovered from the staffing and associated child care spots lost during the pandemic. I will continue to advocate for funding that allows child care centers to adequately pay teachers and provide critical services while keeping costs affordable for working families.



# Community Resources

## **Fresh2You - Expanded Benefits for SNAP Recipients**

Starting April 15, SNAP recipients are eligible for an expanded match to purchase more healthy food, including produce, dairy and meats at farmers markets. Recipients will receive \$2 for every \$2 spent to help money go farther and put more fresh food in families' kitchens. [Follow this link to find a farmers market near you.](#)

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## **Dryden Southworth Library Computer Training**

From Southworth Library:

Southworth Library will provide free basic computer and tablet instruction this May for adults. No prior experience is necessary.

- Monday, May 1 at 10 am: Internet Basics and Cyber Security. Learn how to access the world of information and communication on the internet and how to protect your digital profile
- Monday, May 8 at 10 am: Tablet Basics. Learn the world of apps on several different devices, Android and Apple IOS included. You can also bring your own device for additional help
- Monday, May 15 at 10 am: Ebook Basics. Learn about the LIBBY program and app to download ebooks and audiobooks from the library. We have over 35,000 items available for free use with a valid library card.

The classes are free and require no computer experience. Register by calling the library at 607-844-4782 or stop in during our open hours to reserve your spot.

Connect with us online at [www.southworthlibrary.org](http://www.southworthlibrary.org), or email [southworthlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:southworthlibrary@gmail.com).

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## **Lansing Central School District School Board Candidates' Forum**

**Monday May 8, 7 pm,** The League of Women Voters of Tompkins County is sponsoring a Candidates' Forum for the Lansing Central School District School Board Elections starting immediately following a Budget hearing, meet the Candidates and the School Board meeting. These take place in room LGI at the High School. [Click here for Information regarding the School Board and the Candidates.](#)



Questions for the Candidates will be taken from the audience on note cards handed out at the meeting. Those unable to attend may submit questions at [pres.tclwv@gmail.com](mailto:pres.tclwv@gmail.com) up until **9 pm on May 7**. The Lansing School Elections take place from 7 am to 9 pm.

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## **History of Environmental Thought - Student Presentations**

From the Tompkins Center for History & Culture:

Michael Smith, Professor of History and Environmental Science at Ithaca College, developed a course in environmental history requiring students to use local historical resources to study an event in the greater Ithaca area. In doing so, it is his hope that students will develop a sense of “ecological citizenship” and an understanding that they are a part of the community they are studying.

Through a partnership with The History Center, students are recognizing the reciprocal impact of human behavior and ecological changes from events such as the major floods that have affected Tompkins County (most notably in 1935), the development of the Commons, and the 1903 typhoid epidemic (especially notable as environmental history in the wake of the pandemic).

Each of the groups will present a synopsis of their findings on **Tuesday, May 2, from 7-9 p.m.** at The History Center.

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In solidarity and health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.



**ALBANY OFFICE**  
LOB 833  
Albany, NY 12248  
518-455-5444

**CORTLAND OFFICE**  
83 Main St  
PO Box 5026  
Cortland, NY 13045  
607-208-2024

**ITHACA OFFICE**  
106 East Court Street  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
607-277-8030

Assembly District 125 | [kellesa@nyassembly.gov](mailto:kellesa@nyassembly.gov)