



February 5, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

I had another busy week in Albany as I wind my way through the Executive budget review with my colleagues and the season of Budget Hearings. With the Executive budget now public, I have also started advocating in earnest for the changes and additions we need to see to ensure critical services like education, childcare, housing access, healthcare, and environmental resiliency are sufficiently funded. Read below for the week's highlights!

New Bills to Track

Prohibiting Carbon Dioxide Fracking

New York State wisely prohibited high-volume hydraulic fracturing in 2020, and now we must extend that commitment to ban the use of pressurized, liquified carbon dioxide (CO₂) for oil and gas extraction. The fossil fuel industry is attempting to get around the state's fracking ban by using CO₂, which is experimental, reckless, and is only financially viable with huge taxpayer-funded federal tax credits. The process also poses many of the same threats to our water, health, and climate. I am proud to have

introduced legislation with Senator Lea Webb ([A8866/ S8357](#)) to prohibit using carbon dioxide to drill and extract fossil fuel-based oil and gas.

There is no conclusive evidence that injected CO2 will stay in the ground, but we know it will lead to methane leakage already proven to have significant negative health impacts. Pressurized CO2 is also highly caustic when in the presence of the smallest amount of water. To use this CO2 for oil and gas extraction, it must be transported through a spiderweb of thousands of miles of pipelines across the country, risking pipe corrosion and ruptures. We cannot afford to compromise the safety of our communities, contaminate our water resources, or perpetuate the false promise of economic prosperity. We must stand firm against CO2 fracking and safeguard New York for generations to come. I joined with fellow legislators, environmental groups, and activist and actor Mark Ruffalo for a virtual press conference this week. Read more in this recent [Spectrum news article](#) or [watch the full press conference](#).



Legislative Update

Advocating for Sentencing Reform

New York has one of the largest prison populations in the country, and one of the most expensive. New York State taxpayers spend \$3 billion per year incarcerating approximately 30,000 people. While we all value public safety, overwhelming research demonstrates that incarceration is one of the most expensive and least effective ways to promote rehabilitation and improve public safety. Providing educational and vocational opportunities for incarcerated individuals – and then allowing them to earn time towards their sentences for participating in these rehabilitative opportunities – will reduce violence in our prisons between those incarcerated as well as against corrections officers and healthcare workers, prepare individuals for reentry, reduce recidivism, and improve public safety. I joined legislative colleagues and advocates in Albany this week calling for sentencing reform, including the passage of the [Earned Time Act](#) that I champion. I'm proud to have [the support of unions](#) and [criminal justice experts](#) and will continue to advocate for its passage this session! You can [watch a video](#) of my remarks at the press conference.



Legislative Package to Rescue EMS

Ambulance wait times are getting longer and longer, and a lack of volunteers and funding shortfalls have thrown our Emergency Medical Services (EMS) systems into crisis. The current statewide EMS system is complex, with some services provided by for-profit agencies, some from community not-for-profits, some from municipal EMS departments, and some EMS services provided as part of a municipal Fire Department. Because the complex mechanism of funding is different for each system, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to guarantee sustainable effective statewide EMS.

I joined the [New York State Association of Counties \(NYSAC\)](#), [the Firefighters Association of the State of NY](#), and fellow legislators this week to introduce a package of complementary legislative solutions that addresses the lack of operational funding, insufficient wages, incomplete Medicaid

coverage, inadequate Medicaid reimbursement rates, and antiquated restrictions that hamper all service systems. A bill in the package that I am championing will ensure EMS providers are reimbursed for providing treatment on site, and that providers have the flexibility of transporting patients to non-emergency-based settings when appropriate so they can maximize their availability to all emergencies in their service area. You can learn more from [NYSAC's Rescuing EMS Factsheet](#) and [watch a video of my remarks](#).



Advocating for the Climate Change Superfund

The burning of fossil fuels is the primary cause of climate change, and as oil companies primarily contributed to our climate crisis, they should now pay to repair the damage they caused. I joined with legislators and advocates at a press conference this week in support of the Climate Change Superfund Act ([A3351](#)), which requires the oil industry to contribute \$3 billion towards resiliency and adaptation measures made necessary by the burning of fossil fuels. I am proud to support the bill and will continue to advocate for its inclusion in the 2025 Budget!

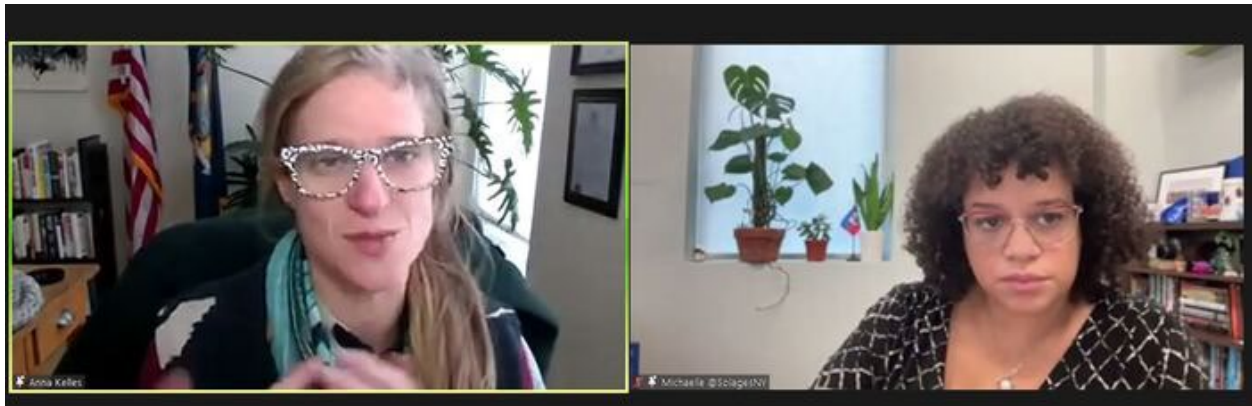


Defending Raise the Age (RTA)

In 2018, we made significant changes to how we treat 16- and 17-year-olds charged with crimes, making New York one of the last states to treat 16- and 17-years as children and shifting youth offenders out of adult prisons. According to the [New York State Division of Criminal Justice Statistics](#), in 2021, youth index crimes were down 64% compared to 2017, before the RTA Act's implementation.

Why is the RTA so important? The prefrontal cortex of the brain is not fully developed until around the age of 25, and it is predominantly responsible for decision making, specifically the critical evaluation of pros and cons before a

decision is made. This part of the brain is still highly malleable during teenage years, and data shows that punitive systems can have severe negative and permanent consequences on brain function if solely used rather than clear guidance and intervention. However, as New Yorkers are increasingly concerned about crime, some are looking to roll back recent reforms. We all want public safety, but rolling back Raise the Age will not make our communities safer. Actually implementing RTA will. We need to cut through the red tape causing insufficient implementation of RTA and get the funds allocated to where they can positively impact youth and communities. In partnership with Assemblymember Michaelle Solages, Children's Defense Fund, Citizens' Committee for Children, and Youth Represent, I hosted a briefing for legislative colleagues. Read more in my [recent Op-Ed in City and State NY](#).



New Laws

“Rape is Rape” Signed into Law

Rape is rape, and I am proud to have attended the event this week as Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law updated language that aligns with what survivors have been forced to endure. Under previous law, oral and anal sexual conduct were referred to as ‘criminal sexual acts’ and were not recognized as rape. Not calling these horrific crimes what they are has both legal and harmful emotional consequences for survivors, both invalidating and adding to the trauma they’ve already endured. With this new law, we are reassuring survivors that, when they walk into a police station or approach the witness stand, all forms of rape will be investigated and prosecuted for what they are.

If you or someone you know needs help, the New York State's Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline provides free, confidential support 24/7 via call, text, or chat: 800-942-6906 (call), 844-997-2121 (text) or [opdv.ny.gov](https://www.opdv.ny.gov) (chat). In our district, the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County and the Cortland YWCA Aid to Victims of Violence provide services to rape survivors.



NEW YORK STANDS WITH SURVIVORS

**GOVERNOR HOCHUL SIGNS
RAPE IS RAPE LAW**



Around the District

Cortland Standard Historic Business Preservation Registry

Local businesses are the backbone of New York State and have helped shape our history, heritage, and community identity. In 2020, New York State created the [Historic Business Preservation Registry](#) to honor and celebrate businesses that have been in operation for more than 50 years and have helped shape the history and identity of communities. I am proud to have nominated [The Cortland Standard](#) for inclusion on the registry and to have an opportunity to celebrate their inclusion with the Cortland community.

The Cortland Standard has been in operation since 1867 and is the second-oldest family-owned news organization in New York. As many newspapers and news organizations are closing or consolidating, the Cortland Standard still prints a newspaper dedicated to the news of Cortland County five days a week. Local news is valuable to the life and understanding of a community, and journalism is at the heart of our democracy.

Congratulations for over 150+ years of amazing dedication and service to our community!



Community Resources

Grant Action News

The Assembly publishes the Grant Actions News monthly, compiling great grant opportunities from state, federal and private agencies, and you can now review the [February 2024 edition](#). All not-for-profit applicants applying

for state grants must pre-qualify on the [NYS Grants Reform Website](#). Potential not-for-profit applicants are strongly encouraged to begin the process of registering and pre-qualifying immediately, as this is a lengthy process.



In good health,

Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

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