



Dear Friends,

With seven legislative days before the session ends on June 10th, I was once again up in Albany this week. Monday was Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day, during which the Assembly passed a package of reforms that help advance our commitment to treating every New Yorker with dignity and respect. We also passed a revision to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which will provide more nutritional options to some of our state's most vulnerable residents. Meanwhile, the [Emergency Rental Assistance Program](#) will begin accepting applications on Tuesday, for those renters and landlords hard hit financially by the pandemic.

But before getting to all that... as many of you know, Tuesday was the one-year anniversary of the death of George Floyd. It was an opportunity for us all to reflect on the past year, what has changed and what has not. As with many issues, far too little has changed. We simply haven't done nearly enough. Our society hasn't changed nearly enough. People of color are still afraid. Racism, antisemitism, violence against the AAPI community and hatred continue.

That said, I have reasons to be hopeful. As a member of the NYS Assembly, I serve on the Correction Committee. I've been meeting with advocacy groups and individuals that have been personally impacted by our justice system. I've also met with police chiefs and law enforcement. We are trying to work together to bring about fundamental change. We are having open and honest discussions.

We can't bring back George Floyd. We can't bring peace to his family. But we can acknowledge the failures of our society and work toward rooting out systemic racism in hopes of creating a safer and more equitable place for all.



Finally, as we head into the Memorial Day weekend, I'd like to take this opportunity to share with you the very special ceremony I will be attending on Monday, honoring Sergeant Joseph G. Lemm, who gave his life for our country in Afghanistan in 2015. More on this below.

[Application Process for Residential Rental Assistance Opens Tuesday](#)

Many New Yorkers were hit hard financially by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, many tenants have found themselves unable to pay rent, causing economic hardship for their landlords.

The budget we passed in early May provides 2.7 billion in rental assistance through the [Emergency Rental Assistance Program \(ERAP\)](#), **which will open to applications this Tuesday, June 1st at 9:00 am**. The program – funded mostly through federal dollars received from the American Recovery Plan – will provide relief for low and moderate-income households that have suffered economically due to the pandemic, and who risk homelessness or housing instability. For those who are eligible, **the program provides rental arrears and temporary rental assistance, as well as utility arrears assistance.**

New York state residents are eligible for assistance if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Household gross income is at or below [80 percent of the Area Median Income \(AMI\)](#). These income limits differ by county and household size. A household may qualify based on current income or calendar year 2020 income that is at or below 80 percent AMI.
- On or after March 13, 2020, a member of the household received unemployment benefits **or** experienced a reduction in income, incurred significant costs **or** experienced financial hardship, directly or indirectly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The applicant is obligated to pay rent at their primary residence and has rental arrears (rent overdue) at their current residence for rent owed on or after March 13, 2020.
- The household must be at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability, which can be demonstrated by having rental arrears owed on or after March 13, 2020.

There are no immigration status requirements to qualify for the program.

The assistance can be applied for by either the tenant or landlord. If approved, an applicant may receive:

- Up to 12 months of rental arrears payments for rents accrued on or after March 13, 2020.
- Up to 3 months of additional rental assistance if the household is expected to spend 30 percent or more of their gross monthly income to pay for rent.
- Up to 12 months of electric or gas utility arrears payments for arrears that have accrued on or after March 13, 2020.

For the first 30 days, the program will prioritize those with the lowest incomes and those who are most vulnerable due to complicating factors (such as continued unemployment or an eviction case pending). After 30 days, the program will open up on a first come, first served basis, as long as funds are available.

Payments will be made directly to the landlord or utility company, with the applicant being notified of the funds paid on their behalf. In accepting the payments from the program for rent in arrears, the landlord agrees to waive any late fees and that the amount provided satisfies the tenant's full rental obligation. Moreover, the tenant cannot be evicted for lease expiration or holdover tenancy – nor can their rent amount be raised – for a period of one year from receipt of the ERAP funds.

To learn more about the program, including the documents needed to apply, please visit: <https://otda.ny.gov/programs/Emergency-Rental-Assistance>.

[Disability Legislation Package](#)

After an incredibly difficult year, it is more important than ever that we look out for our most vulnerable New Yorkers and help ensure a bright future is within reach for all. At the same time, people with disabilities have contributed so much to the prosperity of our state and serve an essential role in our workforce. That is why it is imperative that we promote inclusive workplaces and ensure those who face injustice can speak out and receive the benefits they deserve. As a member of the People with Disabilities Committee and Chair of the Subcommittee on Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities, I care deeply about these issues.

In honor of this year's May 24th Legislative Disabilities Awareness Day, [the Assembly came together to pass a robust legislative package](#) that, if also passed in the NYS Senate, will help more individuals with disabilities live independently, have access to vital resources, and become more active members of their communities. Included in this package is:

- **A refundable tax credit for small businesses that employ people with disabilities.** The value of the credit ranges from \$5,000 to a maximum of \$25,000 per employee. This differs from the workers with disabilities tax credit that was passed earlier this year, which instead offers a nonrefundable credit to any qualified employer.
- **Legislation that restores the rights of state employees to sue New York State for damages** due to violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993.
- To help ensure New Yorkers with disabilities can get involved and form connections in their communities, **a bill requiring interpreters and assistive listening devices for deaf or hard of hearing individuals be available at public meetings.**
- A **bill creating a tax credit for new or retrofitted residences** designed to be universally accessible and adaptable.
- Creation of a **new program – the Office of the Independent Intellectual and Developmental Disability Ombudsman Program** – which would help address the complex and diverse needs of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

The legislative package has now moved over to the Senate for its consideration.

Moving forward, the Assembly will continue to push for policies that expand and create new opportunities for New Yorkers with disabilities.

[SNAP Benefits Expanded for State's Most Vulnerable](#)

On Monday, the Assembly [passed a bill](#) that mandates NYS enter into the federal Restaurant Meals Program. This program allows **homeless, elderly and disabled SNAP recipients to use their SNAP benefits to purchase prepared or hot foods** from participating restaurants, delis, and grocery stores, at reduced prices.

The pandemic both revealed and exacerbated the concerning level of food insecurity throughout New York State. Currently, SNAP recipients here cannot use their benefits for prepared foods. This bill ensures that those who are most in need – who often don't have access to cooking or food preparation tools – are able to fully use their SNAP benefits.

I am happy to report that this bill has now passed both the Assembly and Senate and is awaiting the Governor's signature.



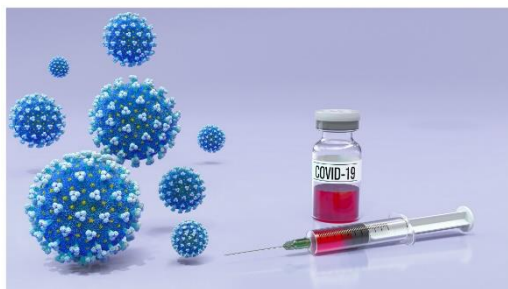
Click above to view the remarks I made in support of expanding SNAP benefits by participating in the federal Restaurant Meals Program.

'Get A Shot to Make Your Future' **Win a Chance for a Full SUNY or CUNY Scholarship!**

Wednesday, the Governor [announced](#) the 'Get a Shot to Make Your Future' incentive beginning May 27th. **The incentive gives all 12-17 year olds who get (or have received) the COVID-19 vaccination the opportunity to enter into a drawing for a full four-year scholarship to a SUNY or CUNY school.** The scholarship will include room, board, books and supplies.

The program will run through July 7th. The state will pick 10 winners per week over a five-week period, for a total of 50 scholarships. Any person 12-17 who has received at least the first shot is eligible to enter the drawing. *(Note: currently Pfizer is the only vaccine approved for this age group.)*

Lottery registration will begin shortly. Parents and guardians can [sign up](#) to be notified when and how they can enter their child's name, once they have received their first shot.



On a related note, the Governor [announced earlier this week](#) that **all schools will be open for in-person learning in September**, another positive sign of life slowly returning to normal.

Memorial Day - Remembering Our Country's Heroes

On Monday I will be attending the dedication of the NYPD Detective Technical Sergeant Joseph G. Lemm Memorial Bridge in Harrison. Joseph Lemm, a Harrison resident and a 15-year veteran of the NYPD, was killed in 2015 during an intelligence operation near Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan. Five other Americans were killed in the attack. The legislation that led to this dedication was sponsored by my colleague State Senator Shelley Mayer and predecessor Assemblyman David Buchwald.

Sergeant Lemm was a member of the U.S. Air Force, having been activated by the Air Force Reserves and NY Air National Guard. He was killed during his third duty, having previously served two other duties in Afghanistan and Iraq. Nicknamed "Superman" by his fellow officers, he was posthumously awarded a Bronze Star for valor, having put himself in front of the bomber to protect his fellow soldiers. Sergeant Lemm was survived by his wife and two children.

I am grateful to be able to participate in Monday's dedication, as we remember and honor heroes like Sergeant Lemm and all those brave men and women in the military who made the ultimate sacrifice to serve our country. We owe them and their families a debt we can never repay.



Honored to be able to participate in the dedication of a bridge named after Sergeant Joseph G. Lemm, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2015.

If there are any issues that you would like to see covered in a future newsletter, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at burdickc@nyassembly.gov (or simply reply to this email). **Please also follow me on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) for the most up-to-date information.**

Miss any of our previous newsletters? You can [find them here](#).

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Burdick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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