



Assemblyman **Simcha Eichenstein**



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Dear Neighbor:

The last six months have been difficult for all New Yorkers as we grappled with the realities of a worldwide pandemic. We were all affected in some way. Whether dealing with illness and tragedy, economic hardship, or the challenges of lockdown, our communities were hit hard. It was not easy for anyone.

Yet, we refused to succumb to despair or depression. Instead, we rose to the occasion with courage, caring and connectivity. In the midst of an unimaginable reality, we remained upbeat, focused, and proactive. We did our best to ease the burden for others. I am incredibly proud and humbled to represent these amazing neighborhoods.

Our first responders, health care workers, caring teachers, selfless plasma donors and everyone else among us stepped up to the plate to make the best of a challenging situation. I am in awe of our wonderful neighbors and our ability to overcome adversity in times of crisis.

As a member of the New York State Assembly, I generally spend much of my time in Albany fighting to make New York a state that is fair and just for all its residents. But throughout this pandemic, I stayed here at home where I had the opportunity to witness firsthand the overwhelming care, compassion, and consideration that our neighbors have shown to each other. I am incredibly inspired.

I am also proud of my wonderful staff who worked tirelessly during the lockdown as many thousands of callers contacted our office for help and guidance during these difficult months. We may have been working remotely, but we were available to you in your time of need.

Nobody knows what the future will bring, though we all certainly pray that the worst is behind us. But as we enter the Fall and Winter seasons, I know one thing: the residents of the 48th Assembly District have shown tremendous resilience. These difficult circumstances have brought out the best in our people and I will look back at our response with tremendous pride.

As always, feel free to contact our office when you need assistance. You can send us an email at district48@nyassembly.gov or call us at 718 853 9616. I look forward to continuing to serve as your Assemblyman in the State Legislature and to advocate on your behalf.

Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein, 48th District



CENSUS 2020

Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein: Don't forget to respond to the census!

Who gets counted?

Every ten years, the Census Bureau conducts a census that counts every person living in the United States. In the past, our communities have been severely under-represented so I'm urging everyone to participate this time. Any community that is under-represented might not receive the services and funding it deserves.

Why is it important to count everybody?

It's important to participate in the census because this data is used by the government to decide on how to distribute funds, allocate services, and determine representation based on population. It takes just a few minutes to fill out the census form, but the benefits are huge. It's in our best interest to be accurately counted so that we are properly represented. And if we don't respond, we don't count!

How do I fill out the form?

For your convenience, this year you can respond to the census in three ways:

- 1) By paper with the forms you received in the mail
- 2) By phone at: (844) 330-2020
- 3) Or online at: my2020census.gov

If you need help, call my District Office and my staff will be happy to assist you. Please take the time to respond—it only takes a few minutes! Do it for yourself, for your family, and for your community.

"I urge everyone in my district to respond to the Census so that we can be accurately counted. In the past, our communities have been under-represented. We can't allow that to happen again. If we don't respond, we don't count. And if we don't count, we don't matter!"

**Assemblyman
Simcha Eichenstein**

Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein's Hate Crimes Bail Reform Legislation Included in 2020 State Budget

Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein's legislation that would include hate crimes as qualifying offenses for which a judge will have discretion for setting bail was enacted as part of this year's state budget. This significant legislation was included because those who commit hate crimes are individuals who harbor irrational and harmful hate and are more likely to become repeat offenders.

This bill represents an important change to the wide ranging bail reform legislation passed by the New York State legislature in March of 2019 which strictly curtailed the use of cash bail and pretrial detention for many offenders. That legislation, which Assemblyman Eichenstein opposed and voted against, took effect on January 1st, 2020. It was passed by lawmakers in an effort to update and reform bail laws that have been in effect since 1971 and were considered unfair to offenders accused of misdemeanors and non-violent felonies. Many of these offenders did not have the means to post bail and were destined to sit in prison while awaiting their trial. According to the most recently available hate crime data from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, hate crimes in New York City and around the State have risen dramatically in 2019 and continued to grow this year.

"This piece of legislation is a big win for vulnerable communities throughout New York State and I am proud to have sponsored this legislation along with my Senate sponsor, State Senator Andrew Gounardes," said Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein who was the Assembly prime sponsor of this legislation. "By including my legislation in this year's budget bill, we have taken a positive step forward towards ensuring that these hate-filled perpetrators, who often act irrationally and violently, will not be able to immediately strike again. I am grateful to Governor Cuomo and to my fellow legislators who recognized that perpetrators of hate crimes should be considered separately in regards to bail reform."

Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein and MET Council Partner to Provide Emergency Relief to Flatbush Families for Pesach

As the coronavirus pandemic raged through our communities in the weeks leading up to Passover, Assemblyman Eichenstein partnered to provide emergency relief to a group of Flatbush families that were still in desperate need of assistance despite the many food distribution programs. Many of these households have lost their income due to the pandemic and were struggling to feed their families for the holiday.

Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein immediately joined efforts with David Greenfield, CEO of the Met Council, and the Flatbush Community Fund to develop a program where 182 families received an allotment of \$250 to be redeemed at Kosher Palace Supermarket. The funds were deposited directly into the family accounts, easing the burden in a discreet and dignified manner. The owner of the supermarket was so moved by these efforts that he took upon himself to add another 10% to the accounts as well.

"These funds truly made the difference for these families," said Assemblyman Eichenstein. "There is nothing more fulfilling in public service than helping people access their basic needs."

Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein: More Kosher Products Now Added to WIC Program

After receiving many complaints from constituents regarding the lack of kosher options, particularly baby food, available through New York's WIC Nutrition Assistance Program, Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein joined forces with the Assembly Health Committee Chair Richard Gottfried, along with Senator Simcha Felder in the State Senate, urging the NYS Department of Health to include more and higher standard kosher products available through the WIC Program.

After months of lobbying by Assemblyman Eichenstein and fellow legislators, the New York State WIC program has added more kosher certified foods to its list of accepted food products. New York's WIC Nutrition Assistance Program is a lifeline to thousands of families in the Borough Park and Midwood neighborhoods. But until now, the number of high standard kosher certified products included in the program was minimal and that limited the choices available to the many higher standard kosher consumers. In response to the legislators, WIC officially updated its list of accepted foods to include kosher products by companies such as Kemach, First Choice, and Mehadrin. These brands expand the choices available for the kosher family that relies on WIC. In particular, the expanded options on the list provide for baby food, a previously limited option on WIC.

"I am thrilled that the DOH answered our call and has agreed to



include a variety of higher standard certified kosher products on WIC's Acceptable Foods Card, including kosher baby food," said Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein. "This will be a tremendous help to so many families in my district and beyond who are struggling to feed their children, especially during these difficult and uncertain times. I thank Health Chair Gottfried for partnering with me on this important matter that is so vital to many of my constituents and to Jill Dunkel, Jean Reo, and the entire staff at WIC for recognizing the need and responding to our urgent requests."

Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein Distributes Hand Sanitizer and Masks Throughout Midwood and Boro Park



Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein Led the Battle to Open Summer Camps

Months prior to the summer camp season, as far back as April, Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein assembled a coalition of camp directors and a panel of prestigious health professionals and medical doctors to consult on the feasibility of opening summer camps this summer, both day camps and sleepaway camps. This panel of medical experts developed a comprehensive plan on how to allow camps to open safely while ensuring the safety of the campers and staff. As soon as this detailed plan was approved by the medical experts, Assemblyman Eichenstein, who was the first public official to call for camps to open this summer, jumped into action and spent countless hours negotiating with the Governor's senior team in his efforts to ensure our children receive a carefree, happy, and healthy summer experience. "After spending months under lockdown, our kids deserve a safe, wholesome, and fun-filled summer in camp," said Assemblyman Eichenstein.

THE YESHIVA WORLD

May 18, 2020

Eichenstein to Governor Cuomo: We Must Evaluate Possibility of Safe Camps This Summer

As it turned out, Governor Cuomo agreed to open day camps in the State of New York but refused to allow overnight sleepaway camps to function. That decision was a tremendous relief to day campers and their parents while remaining a disappointment to overnight campers. Despite the disappointment, Assemblyman Eichenstein continued to advocate for these campers, even as the summer began, searching for creative and practical solutions that might work for some.

Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein to Governor Cuomo: Families Must Have Full Access to Patients in Hospitals

As New York was battling the COVID-19 pandemic, new policies were put in place by Governor Cuomo and the NYS Department of Health disallowing any visitors for hospital patients. As a result, many families were left in the dark regarding the status of their hospitalized loved ones, and patients were left fending for themselves in their most critical time of need. Unfortunately, those that passed away were unable to have any family members by their side.

After receiving countless frantic calls from constituents desperately awaiting updates about their loved ones as far back as in March, Assemblyman Eichenstein recognized the injustice being served to the families of ailing patients and advocated passionately and forcefully for their needs. Assemblyman Eichenstein realized the cruelty and called on Governor Cuomo to address this injustice by Executive Order to ensure that no family member is left in the dark without access to their loved ones.

In response to Assemblyman Eichenstein's advocacy, as a first step, Governor Cuomo announced in April that end-of-life patients would be allowed visitation and that hospitals should develop clear

COLLIVE

April 12, 2020

After Complaints, NY Hospitals Will Allow Visitation by Family *Governor Andrew Cuomo instructed New York hospitals to allow family members to visit patients in imminent end-of-life situations. Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein and many in the frum community asked for the change.*

protocols for communicating with family members or caregivers of patients who do not have a support person at the bedside. Later, after a two-week successful pilot program which was negotiated with the Governor's Office and the Greater New York Hospital Association, expanded guidance on visitation for all hospitals was finally issued.

"We will never know how many died from neglect over the last couple of months, but hopefully moving forward EVERY hospital will work with us to be there for its patients and their families," said Assemblyman Eichenstein. "I will not rest until families have full access to their loved ones at hospitals".

Office of Assemblyman Eichenstein Helps Thousands Claim Unemployment Benefits

As the COVID-19 pandemic ravaged New York, in addition to the massive health crisis plaguing our state, too many people across our state faced economic crises as they lost their jobs to government-enforced shutdowns. Desperate for economic relief, many filed for unemployment benefits that they were entitled to. However, as the State Department of Labor experienced a massive increase in the number of applications, the system was quickly overloaded leaving many residents in the dark as to when they would be able to pay their bills and basic expenses once again.

Immediately after hearing of the troubles that people were having in claiming their unemployment benefits, the Office of Assemblyman Eichenstein took action.

While our office staff was working remotely, we responded to hundreds of inquiries each week from local residents seeking assistance with the process. Working with the Department of Labor, Assemblyman Eichenstein's office was able to assist 2,428 constituents with obtaining their unemployment benefits in a timely fashion.

The issues that held up the processing of applications varied greatly. After waiting six weeks for benefits, one resident was

told that his application was never entered into the system, despite receiving a confirmation from the Department of Labor. Assemblyman Eichenstein's staff contacted the proper authorities and benefits began arriving within days.

Another constituent did not receive benefits because of an error in processing her social security information. The matter was resolved by the Assemblyman's office, and she also was able to collect benefits soon afterward.

A third constituent did not receive benefits until office staff intervened and discovered that thousands of dollars had been deposited into a fake bank account. The issue was brought to the attention of the DOL and benefits began to appear in the proper account shortly afterward.

These constituents and over two thousand others reached out to Assemblyman Eichenstein's office for help in their time of need and were assisted quickly and efficiently. "I am incredibly proud of my staff for working above and beyond the call of duty during the most challenging of times," said Assemblyman Eichenstein. "Assisting our constituents during times of crisis is what public service is all about."

**2,428 HELPED WITH
UNEMPLOYMENT**
as of 8/14

Open Playgrounds in Some Neighborhoods but Closed in Others: That's Wrong

As the city continued through its reopening phases, residents throughout Midwood and Boro Park wondered why our local playgrounds remained shuttered, despite research showing that outdoor activities are safer for children and their families. Most puzzling of all was the fact that playgrounds in other neighborhoods around the city had in fact been open while all parks throughout the 48th Assembly District remained shut.

Assemblyman Eichenstein recognized the injustice and jumped into action along with Senator Simcha Felder, Councilman Kalman Yeger, together with other community activists. On June 14th, at a press conference in front of Kolbert Park on Avenue L in Midwood, the three elected officials called on City Hall to reopen our local

playgrounds and give our children access to outdoor open space after being locked down at home for three months. Given Governor Cuomo's signoff on reopening playgrounds, the elected officials committed at the press conference that if the city does not open the parks, they would do it themselves. Two days later, after no action by City Hall, the three elected officials took matters into their own hands and reopened all of our playgrounds, allowing our children to enjoy the great outdoors during the hot summer season. Within two days, Mayor de Blasio announced that he will be reopening all playgrounds throughout New York City.



New York State Assembly, Albany, New York 12248



Assemblyman
Simcha
Eichenstein



Summer 2020 Update

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Assemblyman Simcha Eichenstein Instrumental in Ensuring Community-Wide Kosher Lunch Distribution Programs

The kosher lunch distribution programs operating at various locations throughout the district provide a lifeline for so many local families who are in desperate need during these trying times of crisis. Assemblyman Eichenstein fought to ensure that New York City's grab-and-go food programs include high standard kosher options, running to full capacity. These well-stocked distributions offer healthy and nutritious meals and a wide variety of kosher options. These programs are a source of sustenance and survival for so many families and a tremendous source of comfort in trying times.

