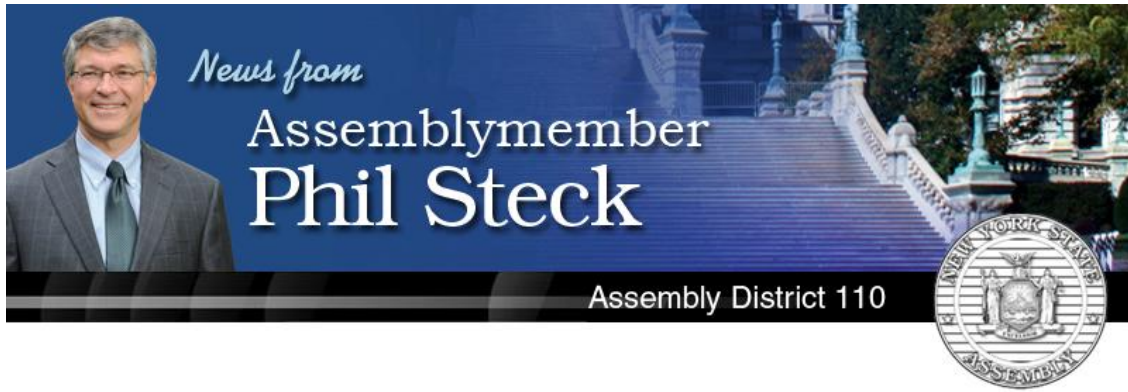




As we move into the final weeks of the year, I want to take a moment to update you on the work my office has been doing both in Albany and throughout our community. This month's newsletter highlights several important legislative efforts I am advancing to lower healthcare costs, including proposals to eliminate facility fees for telehealth appointments and fully end the role of Pharmacy Benefit Managers. These reforms are long overdue and will help ensure New Yorkers can access the care and prescriptions they need without unaffordable add-on costs.

I am also pleased to share a number of investments that continue to strengthen our region. From supporting Jewish Family Services' new Center for Counseling and Resilience to providing funds for the Guilderland Food Pantry and celebrating the opening of the new Iroquois Middle School, these projects reflect what we can accomplish when we work together.

As we plan for the upcoming legislative session, **I hope you will join me for my Year End Town Hall on Thursday, December 18.** Your feedback plays an important role in shaping my priorities, and I look forward to hearing your thoughts on the issues that matter most to you.

Please feel free to reach out to my office with any questions or concerns at [518-377-0902](tel:518-377-0902) or SteckP@nyassembly.gov.

Best,
Phil Steck

Legislative Updates

Addressing Healthcare Costs

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare providers have offered telemedicine as an alternative to in-person appointments. While this increases access to medical services, the healthcare industry has exploited these services by charging patients "facility fees". A facility fee is a charge that hospital systems can add to a bill for appointments at any facilities they own, including a primary care office. Although a telemedicine appointment does not occur in a health care facility, patients can still be charged a facility fee if the health care professional conducts the appointment from a health care facility. To address this abusive practice, I introduced legislation to prohibit healthcare providers from charging facility fees for telehealth services ([a9182](#)). Alabama, Connecticut, Maryland, Ohio, Texas, and Washington State have passed similar legislation.

In addition to eliminating facility fees, I have introduced legislation that mirrors bipartisan federal legislation introduced by Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Josh Hawley (R-MO) to eliminate Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) in New York State ([a6546](#)). PBMs are third-party intermediaries that negotiate and control drug benefits for insurance plans. Since the creation of PBMs in 1966, they have consolidated enormous power and influence that have resulted in the cost of prescription drugs to skyrocket. By eliminating PBMs, New Yorkers will pay less for their prescription drugs and our community pharmacies will be able to compete with big chains like CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart.



Providing Funding for Our Region

I'm proud to share several important investments that have been secured and delivered to organizations throughout our community. These funds are strengthening local programs, improving public safety, expanding recreation, and supporting the health and well-being of families across the region.

None of this happens alone. I'm grateful to our community partners who do the day-to-day work that makes these investments meaningful for the people they serve. I look forward to continuing to support these efforts and building on this progress.



In the Community

Join Me for a Year End Town Hall

I'll be hosting a Town Hall on Thursday, Dec. 18, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Lisha Kill Middle School auditorium. This is an opportunity to talk about the issues that matter most to our community, ask questions and share your ideas as I prepare for the upcoming legislative session.

Whether your concerns involve public safety, education, environmental protection or affordability, your perspective is important and helps guide my work in Albany.

If you plan to attend, please RSVP by clicking the image below. I hope you'll join me for this conversation and look forward to hearing from you.

Join
ASSEMBLYMEMBER PHIL STECK
for a Community **TOWN HALL**

"Your voice matters. I invite you to join me for an open conversation about the issues that are most important to you." - Phil Steck

**December 18
6-8 P.M.**

*Lisha Kill
Middle School
Auditorium
68 Waterman Ave,
Albany, NY 12205*



Click Here To RSVP

Fighting Food Insecurity

I was glad to visit the Guilderland Food Pantry to present a \$25,000 state grant that will support their year-round work feeding local families. Even though the federal government shutdown has been temporarily resolved, many households are still dealing with the uncertainty it created around programs like SNAP. That makes strong support for our local food pantries more important than ever.

This funding will help the pantry expand its School Backpack Program, provide holiday meal packages, and keep shelves stocked for anyone who needs assistance. The Guilderland Food Pantry continues to meet rising demand with dedication and compassion, and I am proud to support their work in our community.

I also want to thank Guilderland Supervisor Peter Barber and his team for joining us, and recognize the Town Hall employees who donated two trunks worth of food, which is a powerful reminder of how much this community steps up for one another. Thank you to Mac McDonnell, the staff, and the many volunteers who make this pantry a lifeline for so many families.



Iroquois Middle School Grand Opening

I was pleased to join the Niskayuna Central School District for the ribbon cutting of the new Iroquois Middle School. This project represents a real investment in our children and in the future of our community!



Supporting Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York

Earlier this week, my Legislative Director, Dylan MacQuoid, attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Center for Counseling and Resilience at Jewish Family Services of Northeastern New York. This new space will support the Presilience Initiative, a program designed to address the growing mental health challenges facing youth and young adults in our community.

I was proud to help secure state funding to support this important work, which brings together direct services, evidence-based trainings, Youth Mental Health Summits, and collaboration with schools, camps, and community organizations. The Presilience Initiative is creating pathways for young people to access support in meaningful and innovative ways, and I am grateful to JFS for its leadership and commitment to strengthening the wellbeing of our region.



Tips & Information

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

As temperatures begin to drop, many families rely on assistance to keep their homes warm. The Home Energy Assistance Program is now accepting applications for the season, and I want to ensure everyone who qualifies knows how to access this support. HEAP helps eligible households pay for heating costs and is available to both homeowners and renters.

If you believe you may qualify, this is a good time to submit your application. Below are helpful contacts and resources for residents in our area:

Albany County

- Albany County Department of Social Services: (518) 447-7300
- Albany County NY Connects / Office for the Aging: (518) 447-7177

Schenectady County

- Schenectady County Department of Social Services: (518) 388-4470
- Schenectady County Office for the Aging: (518) 382-8481

Applications can also be submitted online through the State's benefits portal at mybenefits.ny.gov, and paper applications may be picked up or dropped off at your local DSS office.

Please consider sharing this information with friends, neighbors, or anyone who may benefit. Staying warm and safe throughout the winter is essential and help is available for those who need it.



Winter Recreation Sign-Ups in Albany and Schenectady Counties

Winter is a great time to take advantage of local recreation programs, whether you are looking for activities for children, family events, or fitness opportunities. Both Albany County and Schenectady County offer a wide range of winter programs, and now is the time to register before classes fill up.

Albany County Residents

Albany County Recreation provides seasonal programs for all ages, including youth sports, outdoor activities, and special events.

- [Visit the Albany County Recreation website](#) to view the full winter schedule and register online.
- Residents can also call the Albany County Department of Recreation at (518) 655-7948 for assistance or to request printed materials.

Schenectady County Residents

Schenectady County's Recreation Department offers winter fitness classes, youth programs, arts and enrichment opportunities, and community events throughout the season.

- Browse upcoming programs and sign up by [visiting the Schenectady County Recreation website](#).
- For questions, residents can call the Schenectady County Department of Recreation at (518) 388-4784.

Many of these programs fill quickly, so consider signing up early to secure a spot. These local offerings are a wonderful way to stay active, stay connected, and make the most of the winter months.

