



Dear Neighbors,

We are three weeks into the 2022 Legislative Session, and I have been spending long days in Albany with my colleagues working on the F23 NY State Budget. Last week, Governor Hochul released her [Executive Budget Proposal](#), which determines much of the work that we will do in coming weeks. Now, the work begins in the Assembly to ensure that our One-House budget makes critical investments in our communities as we continue to rebuild and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Budget Hearings are steamed live here if you'd like to follow along: <https://nyassembly.gov/av/live/>

Legislative Update

The Assembly Extended Absentee Voting to Enable New Yorkers to Safely Cast Their Ballots in 2022

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of our democracy, and it's critical that we take steps to make the voting process as easy and accessible as possible. As we continue to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, this also means safeguarding the health and safety of voters. No one should be forced to put their health in jeopardy to exercise their right to vote. That's why I helped pass legislation that would extend current law allowing all New York voters to be eligible to cast their vote by absentee ballot in primary, special and general elections until Dec. 31, 2022 ([A.8432-A](#)).



THE ASSEMBLY MAJORITY



is committed to **protecting voting access** to ensure no New Yorker has to **risk their health** to make their voice heard.

Expanding Justice for Victims

Roughly 1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men in America have been victims of rape or attempted rape in their lifetime ([source](#)). Yet only 25 out of every 1,000 perpetrators will end up in prison. We must work to put a criminal justice system in place that empowers survivors of sexual assault and allows them to hold abusers accountable for the heinous crimes they've committed. The Assembly Majority is committed to this goal and once again passed the 'rape is rape' bill that expands New York's rape statutes and helps survivors in their fight for justice and journey to healing ([A.6319-A](#)).

The bill I helped pass removes the penetration requirement from the state's rape statutes as well as expands the definition of rape to include oral and anal sexual conduct crimes. Under current law, oral and anal sexual conduct are referred to as 'criminal sexual acts' and are not recognized as rape. Failing to call out these disgusting crimes for what they have both legal and emotional consequences for survivors and can not only invalidate but add to the trauma they've endured.

COVID-19 News & Resources

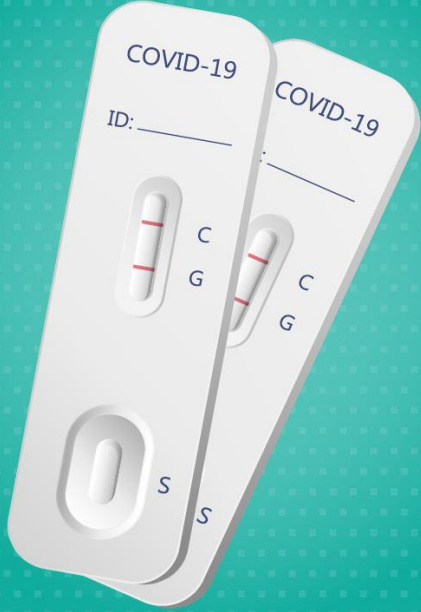
Free at-Home COVID-19 Tests - Federal Government

Every home in the U.S. can soon order 4 free at-home COVID-19 tests. The tests will be completely free with no shipping costs or credit card number required. **Order here:** <https://www.covidtests.gov/>

Free at-Home COVID-19 Tests - Insurance Reimbursements

Insurance companies and group health plans will cover the cost of eight over-the-counter at-home COVID-19 tests per person each month. Getting tested when necessary is crucial to protect yourself and others. Click here for more info:

<https://www.cms.gov/how-to-get-your-at-home-OTC-COVID-19-test-for-free>

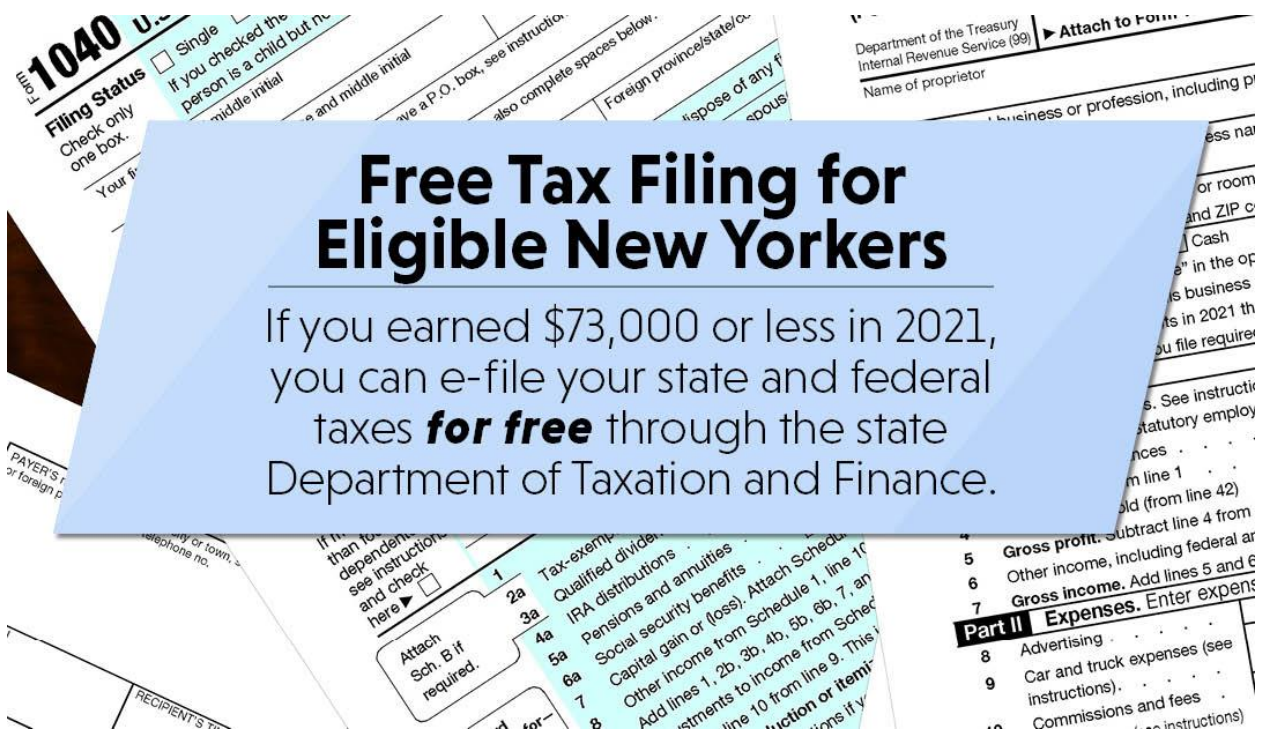


**At-home
COVID-19 tests
must now be paid
for by insurance
companies
without copays
or deductibles.**

Community Resources

Income Tax Return

Tax season is here. To get started on your income tax return, check your refund status, or find free assistance, visit <https://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/efile/>.



Cannabis Conversations

The Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) creates a first in the nation comprehensive regulatory structure to oversee the licensure, cultivation, production, distribution, sale and taxation of medical, adult-use and cannabinoid hemp within New York State.

These *Cannabis Conversations* are the first outreach to communities across New York State conducted by the Cannabis Control Board and the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM). New Yorkers will hear directly about the ins-and-outs of the cannabis law and how it serves as a foundation for the new cannabis industry with a focus on health, safety, and delivering social and economic justice to undo the harms of over policing during the decades-long prohibition of cannabis. The registration link is available here:

<https://ocmeventsny.eventbrite.com>.

You can find the latest information on cannabis.ny.gov and sign up for updates from the Office [here](#).

The New York State Homeowner Assistance Fund (NYS HAF)

The [New York State Homeowner Assistance Fund \(NYS HAF\)](#) is a federally funded program dedicated to assisting homeowners who are at risk of default, foreclosure or displacement as a result of financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who can apply?

- Homeowners who are behind or in forbearance on their mortgage
- Homeowners who are in default on a reverse mortgage
- Homeowners who are behind on their property taxes, water or sewage bills
- Homeowners who are behind on monthly maintenance charges

For details and application guidelines, please visit this website: <https://www.nyhomeownerfund.org/>



Help for New York Homeowners Affected by COVID is Here

 **NEW YORK**
STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | **Homes and Community Renewal**

1-844-77-NYHAF
(1-844-776-9423)

Stay warm this weekend and as always, please reach out to my office with any issues or questions by emailing kellesa@nyassembly.gov or by calling 607-277-8030.

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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