



December 11, 2023

Dear Neighbors,

This past week I joined my fellow Assemblymembers in Albany for our Annual Retreat. This is an opportunity for Members to reconnect, discuss priorities for the coming session, and review statewide financial and administrative updates as we prepare for the legislative session, which is less than a month away!

I also used the time in Albany to connect with the Assembly Program and Counsel teams in a series of several meetings to discuss the legislation I sponsor in various committees. I am grateful for their review and feedback to clarify and strengthen the legislation as I prepare to champion my bills in the upcoming session. My team and I will continue to work on new legislation through January but you can review all the legislation I've introduced to date this term [here](#).

## Legislative Update

### **Agrivoltaics Bill Signed**

I am thrilled to announce that Gov. Hochul signed into law [A4911](#) Agrivoltaics Research Program bill that I sponsored with Sen. Michelle Hinchey. Agrivoltaics is the use of land for both agriculture and solar energy generation simultaneously. Too often agriculture and solar are competing for the best farmland, but this does not need to be the case. This law establishes a 3-year research program at Cornell University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) to develop science-based recommendations and best practices for the dual use of agricultural land so that farmers have more choice and flexibility, while still maximizing agricultural productivity. The research program

is supported by \$1 million in new funding that I championed and secured in the FY2024 State Budget.



# State Budget

## **Upstate Hospital Needs**

At a recent press conference in Albany organized by Assemblymember John McDonald, I added my voice in support of our Upstate hospitals and communities, highlighting the financial needs and staffing shortages. In a recent survey conducted by Iroquois Healthcare Association, 64% of Upstate NY hospitals have a negative or razor thin total operating margin and 76% had fewer than 100 days cash on hand. The amount of staff vacancies is an alarming concern. Vacancy rates for all staff members remains 138% higher than pre-pandemic levels, with vacancy rates for Registered Nurses (RNs) at 164% higher than pre-pandemic levels. This shortage impacts not only hospitals but other related and codependent services like long-term assisted living centers, supportive housing, homecare services, and EMS services. For the health of our residents and economic vitality of upstate communities, we must maintain strong access to hospital services and invest in our healthcare workforce. As we develop the



State Budget, we need to ensure that State Medicaid reimbursement rate increases implemented last year are kept and built upon as we develop a plan to ensure 100% of costs are reimbursed by State Medicaid. You can read more about the press event and the issues in this [recent Times Union article](#).



## New Laws

There have been a number of new laws passed by the Assembly and signed by the Governor, and you can [review the full list](#). I'm proud to have been a co-sponsor of 4 of those bills, including:

[A06656](#) Provides certain protections for victims of real property theft, including authorizing a stay of foreclosure proceedings pending an investigation into theft or fraud.

[A07006B](#) Enacts the Digital Fair Repair Act, which requires original equipment manufacturers of consumer electronics to make available to device owners and independent repair providers any documentation, parts, and tools required for the diagnosis, maintenance, or repair of such products and their parts.

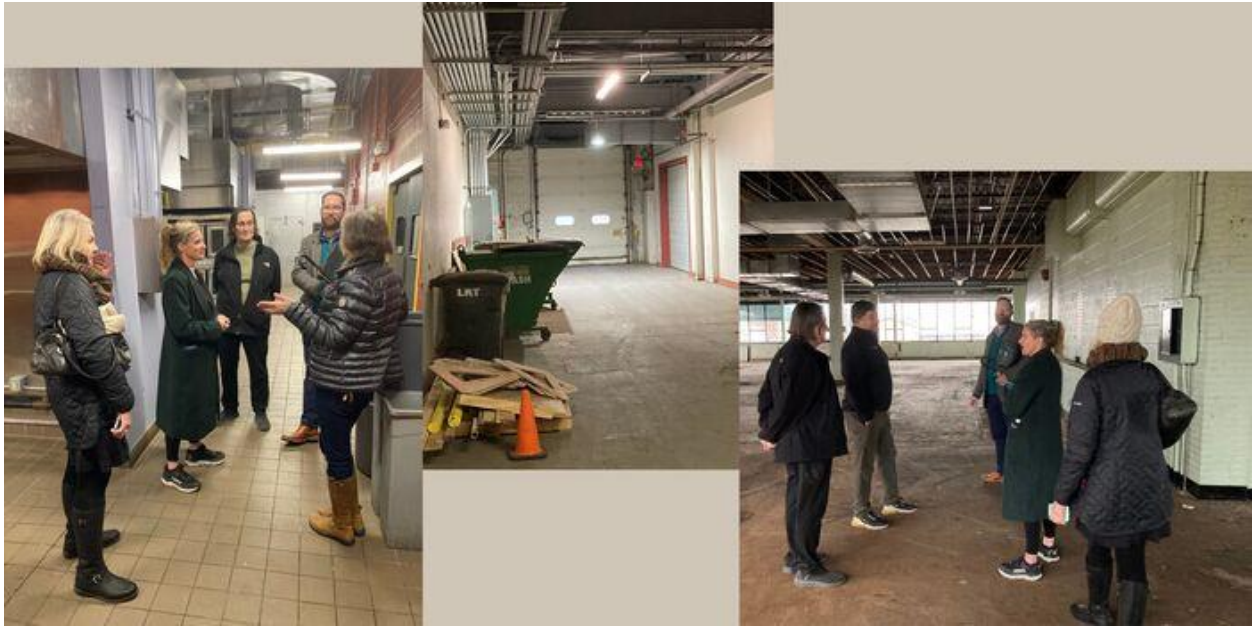
[A00354B](#) Enacts the Tenant Dignity And Safe Housing Act, an act which adjusts real property actions and proceedings law in order to make it easier for tenants outside of NYC to bring actions against a landlord if they are responsible for habitability and housing code violations.

[A07063A](#) An act which prohibits the use of perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances - or PFAS - in apparel as an intentionally added chemical.

## Around the District

### **Geneva Reuse Building Tour**

I went a little bit outside of the district to tour the [Geneva Enterprise Development Center](#), a 200,000 square-foot industrial building in Geneva, NY, to explore the possibility of development of the space into a building materials reclamation hub. The experience was incredibly informative for me as we develop the needs of New York State in building a truly robust circular economy. Large buildings that are capable of receiving and storing building deconstruction materials, such as wood, windows, doors and steel, are a critical piece, serving as “hubs” that can support smaller retail sites as well as a state network of distribution sites. I was energized by all the possibilities for the Finger Lakes area! Thank you to Ithaca resident David West, Director of Planning and Economic Development for the City of Geneva as well as the incoming Executive Director of the City Industrial Development Agency and the Local Development Corporation for organizing and hosting the tour!



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## Wrapping Paper Community Reuse

I am amazed at the community response for our Holiday Wrapping Community Reuse project! My Ithaca district office has received lots of donations of wrapping paper, bags, bows and all you need to wrap your holiday presents! You are welcome to come to the office throughout the week from 1 - 4 p.m. to wrap your presents – or pick up supplies and take home to wrap your presents. It is best to call ahead at 607-277-8030 to ensure staff can assist you. If the hours do not fit your schedule or you are an organization that could also use supplies to support a holiday project, please reach out to my office and connect. We want as many people to join our efforts as possible!





## Holiday Open House

Our community reuse wrapping project will culminate with a Holiday Open House on **Wed. Dec. 20 from 4 - 7 pm** at the Ithaca District Office. Join my staff and I for refreshments and holiday cheer! Bring your presents, and my staff and I will wrap them for you! I hope you can join me!

CELEBRATE COMMUNITY  
REUSE WITH US!

# Holiday OPEN HOUSE



Assemblymember Anna Kelles has collected donations of gift wrapping supplies from the community.

All are welcome to gather at the the Ithaca District Office for holiday cheer! Bring your holiday gifts and Anna and her staff will wrap with the collected supplies!

**DECEMBER 20 | 4-7 PM**  
*130 East State Street, Ithaca NY*

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## District Office Legislative Interns

My district offices in Ithaca and Cortland are continuing to accept [applications for internship positions](#) to begin in January. Interns play a vital role in the administration of the office, gain an understanding of the issues that impact our district and all of New York State, and can learn valuable skills –verbal and written communication, legislative research, organization and interpersonal skills. District office internships for the NYS Assembly are experiences that are unpaid by the NYS Assembly. However, if you are eligible to receive funding from an alternate source or are seeking college credit, we are happy to work with you through those processes should you be

offered an internship opportunity. Please contact the district offices with any questions!

# 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 December 2023 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.



## Barriers to Employment Presentation by LawNY

Arrest and conviction records create barriers and unexpected challenges for people looking for employment. Join Supervising Attorney, Jason Hogue, Esq. from LawNY's Reentry Team, on Wed. Dec. 13 from 12 - 1 p.m. for a presentation to discuss barriers and opportunities to employment for those with a criminal record. It's important to know your rights so you're not unfairly discriminated against. The presentation is open to all community members, parents



and professionals, and you can join in person at Cornell Cooperative Extension (615 Willow Ave, Ithaca) or online via Zoom. [Register here.](#)

## Skip the Stuff

You may soon see signs to “Skip the Stuff” in Ithaca area restaurants. This indicates the eatery is participating in the campaign organized by Zero Waste Ithaca encouraging patrons to forgo the plastic utensils, napkins, straws and condiment packets with their takeout order if they don’t need them. Participating restaurants will distribute the items only upon request, which will reduce unnecessary utensils and packets that customers would just throw out. This can be a simple way for us all to be mindful of reducing waste in our day-to-day habits. Municipalities may enact Skip the Stuff legislation that requires food establishments to only distribute items upon request, and you can learn more on the [Zero Waste Ithaca website.](#)



In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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