



Assemblymember

**Anna Kelles**

Assembly District 125



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Dear Neighbors,

I had another busy week in Albany as the budget season of the legislative session is in full swing! I attended many press conferences in support of the bills I sponsor, bills I co-sponsor, and for issues I champion that we as a community care deeply about. During the legislative session, these newsletters may be longer than off-session, but I intentionally organize these by sections with clear distinct titles, so you can read the topics that interest you. As always, I welcome your feedback on the information I'm sharing!

On that note, read on for this week's highlights!

# Legislative Update

## **Fashion Act Press Conference**

The fashion industry contributes 8% of all greenhouse gas emissions and ranks 2nd in child labor and in the top 5 industries for slave labor, and yet, the industry has never been globally regulated. In our current drive for fast-fashion, pollution is growing exponentially and approximately 92 million tons of textile waste is created every year, with the United States being the

number one driver of this trend in textile consumption and waste generation per capita. I've worked extensively on my sponsored bill, The Fashion Sustainability and Social Accountability Act ([A4333](#)), that will set industry environmental and labor standards for brands and retailers who do business in New York, the fashion capital of the world. I was proud to host a press conference in Albany on January 24 with co-sponsors and advocates, calling for the bill to pass this session. We now have 60 total cosponsors of the Fashion Act in the NY Assembly and hundreds of clothing brands, manufactures, workers' rights groups, environmental organizations, influencers, and others who have joined the official Fashion Act coalition, which you can find at [www.thefashionact.org](http://www.thefashionact.org). [Watch the full conference online.](#)



**Close Seneca Meadows Landfill**

Our current rate of waste production is unsustainable and unnecessary. I joined Seneca Lake Guardian and advocates from the Finger Lakes and Albany to call for the on-time closure in 2025 of Seneca Meadows landfill, which is already the size of a 28-story building and grows by 6,000 tons of waste daily. The Texas company that owns the landfill is campaigning to change the permit end date to 2040 and to add 7 more stories worth of waste, expanding by hundreds of acres. The noxious fumes from the landfill impact both the health and economy of surrounding municipalities and many residents are demanding its closure.

It is time to prioritize longevity of our natural resources over instant gratification and convenience. Much that we send to landfills can and should be reused and recycled. This circular economy will build thousands of jobs and economic development for the state. We need real solutions like deconstruction versus demolition of our buildings, composting food scraps into nutrient dense soils for our agricultural systems, packaging reduction and recycling, and sustainable material recovery to reduce waste instead of just extending the life of landfills. You can read more about the issue and the rally in Albany in this [recent Politico article](#).





## No Slavery in New York Act

Our current prison system depends on forced labor as all able-bodied incarcerated individuals are required to work. Incarcerated individuals produce millions of dollars of furniture and products for New York state, while earning only 10 to 65 cents an hour, and can face severe punishment for refusing to work. Being forced to work against your will is slavery, and it has no place in our carceral system. At the same time, 1 in 3 families of incarcerated individuals go into debt as they struggle to pay for basic needs of their incarcerated loved ones. I'm proud to co-sponsor the No Slavery in New York Act ([A3412B](#)) which would end forced labor in our prisons. You can [watch my comments](#) at a recent press conference in Albany.



## **Farmer Appreciation Breakfast**

I was honored to speak at the Farmer Appreciation Breakfast on January 23 in Albany as a kickoff to the *New York Grown Food for New York Kids* advocacy day and to connect with staff from Cornell's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALIS). School meals are a key source of nutrition for students, who consume on average as much as half of their daily calories at school. Farm fresh foods improve the quality of these meals, and in turn, improve the physical and mental health outcomes for kids. Ensuring these fresh foods come from New York farms helps local farmers and local economies. I'm proud to support Farm to School incentive programs and support streamlining eligibility requirements so that more school districts can easily participate.



# State Budget

## Health Budget Hearing

Home care is a vital service for elderly residents and those with disabilities, assisting them with activities for daily living and enabling them to live at home rather than a nursing home or care facility, which can be more costly. Legislation in 2020 limited the home care activities that were eligible for Medicaid reimbursement, and I'm a proud co-sponsor of [A6346](#) that would remove those restrictions. In the Health Budget hearing this week, I had the opportunity to question Amir Bassiri, Medicaid Director, about home care services.



This past November, the Drinking Water Quality Council recommended that the Department of Health (DOH) designate 23 toxic PFAS chemicals as emerging contaminants and require statewide drinking water testing and notification. I had the opportunity to question Dr. James McDonald, DOH Commissioner, during the hearing, and he confirmed that it is expected that those chemicals will be added to drinking water testing, pending federal guidance. You can [view a video of my questions](#).



**Around the District**

## **Tompkins County Utility Assistance Event**

Thank you to Senator Lea Webb and the NYS Public Utility Law Project (PULP) for hosting the utility assistance event with me in Ithaca! We were able to help residents complete HEAP applications, enroll in NYSEG energy assistance programs, prevent heat shut offs, and connect with energy services. Thank you to the NYS Public Service Commission, NYSEG, and Cornell Cooperative Extension for assisting with the event!

Not able to attend? Residents can call the [PULP](#) toll free hotline at 877-669-2572 to discuss their individual needs and connect to services.

You can also connect with Cornell Cooperative Extension's [Smart Energy Choices](#) for:

- Free home energy assessments
- Low or no-cost programs to insulate and seal air leaks in the home
- Heating system repair and replacement (free for income-eligible households)
- Significant incentives for heat pumps, which cost less to operate than fuel oil, propane, or electric resistance heat
- Community solar that can reduce your monthly electric bill by 5 to 20%





# Community Resources

## Funding Available for Accessibility Modifications and ADUs

INHS has funding through the Access to Home program to assist Tompkins County residents with disabilities in making modifications to their housing for accessibility and safety, such as ramps, lifts, handrails, and grab bars. Eligible properties can be owner-occupied homes, mobile homes, or rental units. Learn more [here](#).

INHS can also assist low- and moderate-income homeowners in the City of Ithaca develop Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) or bring an existing ADU up to code. [Review the flyer](#) to learn more, determine your eligibility, and to apply for a waitlist. Questions on either program can be directed to [homeownership@ithacanhs.org](mailto:homeownership@ithacanhs.org).



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In good health,

*Anna R. Kelles*

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Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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