



March 25, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

Discussion and work continues on the New York State budget as we are quickly approaching the April 1 budget deadline. Amid the budget negotiations, I'm thrilled to share that the bill to ban oil and gas extraction using carbon dioxide fracking ([S8357](#)) passed the Senate this week, after the bill passed in the Assembly ([A8866](#)) last week! I look forward to the Governor taking swift action to close this loophole and signing this bill into law to protect our environment and our health.

Read on for more highlights from the week!

Legislative Update

Advocating for New York's Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

TAP is critically important state-level student financial aid that can help break down financial barriers to higher education and help end generational

poverty and systemic discrimination. I joined Assembly colleagues for a press conference in Albany to #TurnOnTheTAP and both raise the \$80,000/year maximum income threshold for families and increase the minimum TAP award to \$1,000. These levels have not been reassessed or notably adjusted in years and are out of date with the cost of living and cost of education. A robust TAP package will expand eligibility for a wider economic range of families, provide financial support that more closely matches current educational costs, and create flexibility for students who are forced to temporarily leave their educational program for issues such as personal health, family health, and family finances.

Expanding TAP eligibility and accessibility will also help NY businesses address worker shortages in many essential service fields across multiple workforce sectors. Colleges and universities are experiencing declining enrollment due to both a lack of affordability of higher education for working class families and due to lower recent birth rates. Increasing eligibility to TAP will also be a needed boon to our higher education institutions, helping them preserve their diverse and cutting edge academic programs and student services. I'm proud to support increased access to TAP funding to ensure that New Yorkers have the opportunity to pursue their academic aspirations without undue financial strain. Watch a [brief video of my comments](#).



Climate Action Week for Fashion and Apparel

In our current drive for fast-fashion, pollution is growing exponentially, with approximately 92 million tons of textile waste created every year and the fashion industry contributing 8% of all global greenhouse gas emissions. New York is leading the way in the United States for both fast fashion consumption and clothing waste to landfills. 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 any large scale brands and retailers who do business in New York, the fashion capital of the U.S. The coalition of support for the Fashion Act has grown to

61 Assembly co-sponsors along with fashion brands, clothing manufacturers, and environmental and human rights organizations. I had the opportunity this week during [Climate Action Week for Fashion and Apparel](#) to discuss the Fashion Act on a panel with [The Sustainable Fashion Academy](#) and leading experts on how this legislation is essential for ensuring the fashion and apparel industries take responsibility for their environmental and social impacts. You can watch the [recording of the session](#) online or [read more about the bill](#).



Meetings and More Meetings

In my newsletters, I share many photos from press conferences and rallies and from the floor of the Assembly as I advocate for legislation and issues that will improve the lives of New Yorkers. However, I spend many more hours each week in meetings, discussing the issues affecting residents and working through the funding needs and legislation to address those issues. Pictures of meetings may not be as dynamic, but I wanted to share this

“behind the scenes” snapshot that an Assembly photographer captured this week of me and my team working through the language of an important environmental bill that we are optimistic will move this session! I will continue to have the critical conversations necessary to advance solutions for our district and all of New York State.



Around the District

Youth Mental Health and The Children's Home Opening

Addressing youth mental health needs is critical. Youth mental health concerns were rising before the pandemic, and the pandemic not only exacerbated the issue but brought more attention to it. The Children's Home of Wyoming Conference is working to support youth in our area, and I was so honored to attend a ribbon cutting in Ithaca with Senator Lea Webb as the organization opened a new facility for Youth Assertive Community Treatment (Youth ACT) for Tompkins/Tioga county. Youth ACT addresses significant needs of youth ages 10 to 21 who are at risk of, or returning from, mental health inpatient or residential services through the use of a community team. The team can meet with children and youth in their homes or another location to ensure they feel safe and to build trust. The program provides medication support as well as behavioral and mental health support to assist successful transition back into the community and to avoid high end services.

I appreciate the critically important and timely work of the Children's Home and am so thankful that they, with the partnership of Tompkins County Mental Health Department, will be providing care for our youth. As wonderful organizations like Children's Home work to hire staff for their services, I am keenly aware of the shortage of mental health practitioners throughout our state to support their efforts. That is why I am proud to sponsor the Mental Health Equal Opportunity Program bill ([A7591](#)) with Senator Lea Webb that would build upon existing successful EOP higher education programs and establish a financial aid and academic support program to ensure a pipeline of mental health practitioners that are as diverse as the youth and adults they serve.



Community Resources

The Solar Eclipse and Safety

The total solar eclipse on April 8 will be a once in a lifetime event, and I hope everyone can safely enjoy this experience. Even though our district falls outside the “zone of totality” and our area will experience a partial eclipse, it will surely be a memorable event. The [“I love NY” website](#) has information on eclipse times and viewing spots, as well as where to get [free eclipse glasses](#). Please, for anyone planning to take time to view the event, it is important to protect your eyes and not look directly at the sun without [proper eye protection](#).

Tompkins County Public Library is hosting two events in their youth services area for residents to “make and take” eclipse viewers: Saturday, April 6 from 10 am - 4:30 pm and Sunday, April 7 from 1-4:30 p.m. Let’s all enjoy this amazing phenomenon!

APRIL 8, 2024

COME FOR THE ECLIPSE,
STAY FOR
NEW YORK!



THE NEW YORK TOTAL SOLAR ECLIPSE



PLAN YOUR VISIT TODAY. VISIT WWW.ILOVENY.COM/ECLIPSE I ♥ NY

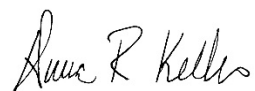
Free Eyecare Clinics for Tompkins County residents

The [Ithaca Free Clinic](#) has partnered with the [Ithaca Lions Club](#) to provide free optometry and optician services to all Tompkins County residents and children over the age of 5. Free services include complete dilated eye exams, glaucoma screenings, and prescription eyeglasses to those in need. Upcoming clinic dates are March 27, April 12, May 10, and May 24. For more information and to schedule an appointment, email clinic@ithacahealth.org or call 607-330-1254.

Research Study to Assist Veterans

Weill Cornell Medicine is conducting a research study for those affected by military sexual trauma. Review the flyer from the [Program for Anxiety and Traumatic Stress Studies](#) to learn more or call 212-821-0783 if eligible and interested in participating.

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

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