



June 3, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

We are entering the final week of the legislative session, and it is a critical time for the legislation I sponsor and have been championing. I continue to work closely with Assembly leadership and fellow legislators to make necessary amendments on bills and advocate strongly so that our priority bills can cross the finish line in both the Assembly and the Senate. Send me productive thoughts and resolve for this final crazy sprint to the finish line!

Below are the week's highlights, and I look forward to providing a full legislative summary after the session concludes.

Legislative Update

Uniform Health Records for Incarcerated Individuals Bill Passes the Assembly

Some correctional facilities in New York still maintain medical files of incarcerated individuals on paper stored in physical files within the facility. This not only leaves the records vulnerable to damage by physical events such as floods or fires but also can make the physical transfer of incarcerated individuals to different facilities more difficult or endanger a

person if their medical file is lost or inaccessible. I'm proud that the bill I sponsored to establish uniform health records for incarcerated individuals ([A5902](#)) recently passed the Assembly. The legislation directs the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, in consultation with the Commissioners of Health and Mental Health, to develop a uniform electronic medical records system to be used by healthcare professionals in all correctional facilities in the state, which will best facilitate the care process. I look forward to the bill passing in the Senate!



Native Plant Seed Supply Bill Passes the Assembly

Plants native to a region are the most effective in supporting the entire ecosystem of a region, providing food and shelter for native animals, promoting pollinators, and supporting clean water. For example, some native plants have long and robust root systems, which can absorb more water, reduce stormwater runoff, purify water and replenish groundwater supply. However, over the last century, urbanization has changed our landscapes,

reducing biodiversity and populations of native plants. Most landscaping plants available in commercial nurseries are non-native species. While there is a growing recognition of the need for native flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees, there is no formal supply chain to meet the needs of home gardens, no less municipal, county and city projects. I'm proud that a bill I championed to create a native plant seed supply program ([A9043](#)) recently passed in the Assembly. The legislation would make native seeds more accessible, require the state to use native seeds whenever possible and practicable, and encourage citizens to do the same.



Protecting Utility Customers

Every New Yorker deserves access to affordable, reliable utility services from responsive providers that quickly address complaints. I'm proud to have helped pass legislation that modernizes complaint handling procedures for utility companies, protecting utility customers across our state ([A.1745A](#)). Currently, there are no real standard procedures or timelines for utility companies to resolve customer complaints. This bill would improve complaint-handling procedures by including coverage of all complaints, reporting on complaints within reasonable and defined time periods, adding

a requirement that all reports be made in writing and imposing penalties against non-complying utilities. Wrongful overcharges, the withholding of customer money, and failure to respond to complaints have added a great deal to the financial hardship that many New York families already face. I will continue to ensure that utility companies, which provide essential services that every New Yorker relies on, observe basic standards of consumer accountability.



**THE
ASSEMBLY
MAJORITY**

.....
PROTECTING
.....
UTILITY
.....
CUSTOMERS

Resolution in Recognition of Landscape Architecture

Landscape architecture is a multifaceted profession that encompasses the analysis, design, planning, management, and stewardship of the natural and built environment, playing a crucial role in shaping the spaces where people live, work, and play. I was honored to introduce a resolution recognizing landscape architects ([K02113](#)) that recently passed the Assembly. This year marks the 125th anniversary of the [American Society of Landscape Architects](#) and is an opportunity to reflect on the profession's transformative impact on public health, safety, and welfare by designing accessible and safe public spaces, promoting active lifestyles, and fostering resilient and sustainable outdoor environments. I had the pleasure of welcoming Scott Whitham, a landscape architect from the district, and a group of his colleagues to the Assembly recently, and you can [watch a video of my comments](#) and introduction from the floor.



From the Governor

Funding Opportunities in Round XIV of the Regional Economic Development Council Initiative

Governor Hochul [announced](#) the launch of Round XIV of the Regional Economic Development Council Initiative. Round XIV includes \$445 million in core capital grant and tax-credit funding combined with a wide range of programs from eight state agencies, including \$100 million in grant funds from Empire State Development (ESD), available to projects on a continuous basis. The Councils are encouraged to support projects that advance or address strategic state priorities - including distressed communities, childcare, innovative public-partnerships, and green buildings and sustainable development.

In Round XIV, ESD is launching two new grant programs: the **Capital Improvement Grants for Pro-Housing Communities Program** and the **Small Manufacturer Modernization Grants Program**. Up to \$40 million will be available to municipalities, counties and not for profits through the Capital Improvement Grants for Pro-Housing Communities Program, to support capital improvement and placemaking projects located within pro-housing communities that are certified by Homes & Community Renewal. The program is designed to directly support local participation in Governor Hochul's [Pro-Housing Communities Program](#) to invest in and create more vibrant communities throughout New York State. Grant awards will range from \$100,000 to \$3,000,000. In our district, currently the City of Ithaca and the Village of Dryden are certified pro-housing communities. Additionally, municipalities that have submitted letters of intent to become pro-housing

communities include the City of Cortland, the Town of Dryden, and the Village of Groton.

Up to \$10 million will be available through the Small Manufacturer Modernization Grants Program, which will award grant funds to small legacy manufacturers across the state to invest in modernization and integration of advanced technologies. Grant awards will range from \$50,000 to \$250,000.

[Consolidated Funding Application](#) (CFA) workshops will be held throughout the State for applicants to attend and learn about programs offered through REDC Round XIV along with additional funding opportunities from various state programs including offerings from the Office of Strategic Workforce Development and Small Business Programs by ESD. A full schedule of workshops and webinars can be found [here](#). Workshops in our region include **June 12 in Binghamton and June 20 in Syracuse**. The **deadline for applications is Wednesday, July 31 at 4 p.m.**

Community Resources

Survey to Support Funding for Private Wells and Septic Systems

Tompkins County Whole Health (TCWH), in collaboration with Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Services (INHS), invite the community to complete a survey related to the attainment of a grant that could cover 100% of the costs of repairing or replacing septic systems, as well as specific private water well repairs for income-eligible Tompkins County residents. Septic system maintenance can be a major, but necessary, expense for households. In order to obtain this funding, TCWH must prove the need for

this service in Tompkins County homes. Please complete this [brief online survey](#) by **Saturday June 15**, if the below are applicable to your household:

- Septic system must be pumped a lot, has backed up into the home, or is otherwise struggling to function, OR
- Septic system is more than 20 years old, OR
- Septic system is impacting a drinking water well, OR
- Home is NOT on municipal water, meaning you have a private water well.

The information obtained by this survey will be used to meet a requirement of the grant for a waiting list of low-to moderate income households interested in this funding. If these funds are allocated to Tompkins County, the list may be utilized to notify those eligible households that funds have been made available.

Review this [promotional flyer](#) for more information and contact Tompkins County Environmental Health at 607-274-6688 or email Doug Barnes at dbarnes@tompkins-co.org with any questions.

How is your Septic System?

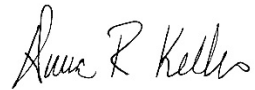
**Please let us know
by taking a brief
online survey.**



OPWDD Listserv

The [Office for People with Developmental Disabilities](#) (OPWDD) maintains an email listserv for individuals who receive OPWDD services, their family and caregivers, and support professionals to receive updates regarding various opportunities. You can sign up to receive the email updates through [this online form](#).

In good health,



Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

**ALBANY
OFFICE**
LOB 833
Albany,
NY 12248
518-455-
5444

**CORTLAND
OFFICE**
83 Main St.
Cortland, NY
13045
607-208-2024

**ITHACA
OFFICE**
130 East
State St.
Ithaca,
NY
14850
607-277-
8030