



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

Patch: Bill Creating Cabinet-Level Flood Prevention Office Passes NY Senate

JEFF EDWARDS February 15, 2024

By unanimous vote, legislation establishing a statewide "flood czar," proposed by Sen. Shelley Mayer, is one step closer to becoming law.



The New York State Senate unanimously passed a bill sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer to establish a cabinet level Office of Flood Prevention and Mitigation. (Jeff Edwards/Patch)

NEW YORK — Efforts to prevent and mitigate flood risks in New York had a big win in Albany this week.

The New York State Senate unanimously passed a bill, sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer, to establish a cabinet level Office of Flood Prevention and Mitigation. The bill now heads to the New York State Assembly for a vote and then, if passed, to Governor Hochul's desk for her signature.

"During severe storms like Hurricane Ida, we lost community members and countless people endured severe damage to their homes and more faced financial burden," Mayer said. "Since Ida, residents and businesses in my district and in neighboring communities have been impacted by increasingly intense and frequent storms brought on by climate change, and are often hit with another downpour before they can rebuild."

Through Mayer's legislation ([S.3335](#)), the Office of Flooding Prevention and Mitigation will be tasked with coordinating existing state work on flooding, supporting municipalities in their efforts to prevent and mitigate flooding, and researching flooding impacts and mitigation in New York.

"The Office of Flooding Prevention and Mitigation will provide New Yorkers with a strong, coordinated and strategic approach to tackling the effects of climate change, requiring all levels of government and agencies within government to work together to identify and execute mitigation and resiliency plans," Mayer said. "It will help provide municipalities,

counties, and individuals with the tools we need to tackle the scale of the work ahead."

The lawmaker, who represents areas along the Long Island Sound hardest hit by recent floods, said New York State is facing intensifying climate change related hazards and storms, causing long term devastation. Westchester and the surrounding Hudson Valley, Long Island, and New York City, in particular, face challenges recovering from destructive storms and are often unable to fully recover from one storm before another one strikes.

This legislation will assess the areas of the state and populations at greatest risk, identify the best current emerging practices in flood management, preparedness, and resiliency and make recommendations to the governor and legislature to help develop a statewide strategy for addressing flood risks.

Mayer said she conducted a survey of her constituents about their top concerns and priorities. Twenty-five percent of the respondents marked flooding and climate change as one of their top priorities.

Assemblyman Steve Otis urged his colleagues to pass the bill to the governor for her signature.

"Flood events and damage have become a frequent and repeated challenge throughout the state," Otis said. "Our state agencies have responded by offering more resources, expertise and guidance to local governments to address flood recovery, mitigation, and preparedness projects. A new State Office of Flood Prevention will be an added benefit. The unit will coordinate state agency assistance and provide a central office for local governments to access expertise from state government."

NYS Sen. Pete Harckham, Chair of the Senate Committee on Environment Conservation, said there is a reason the legislation passed unanimously in the state senate.

"People want meaningful action on the climate crisis, environmental protections and stormwater mitigation," Harckham said. "To do so, we need to put as much effort as possible into passing climate and stormwater legislation this year to safeguard our communities statewide."

Local leaders said that having a centralized authority for flood-related issues will help the communities most at risk to plan for a changing future and prepare for the worst.

"The Village of Larchmont is extremely grateful to Senator Mayer for her work to pass the legislation establishing a central office for flood prevention and mitigation," Larchmont Mayor Sarah Bauer said. "As a community that is subject to significant flooding events, which are only increasing with climate change, we appreciate the willingness of Senator Mayer and the State Senate to work towards assisting communities such as ours that suffer from these flooding events."

Mamaroneck Town Supervisor Jaine Elkind Eney, concurred, noting that a one-stop shop for flood-related issues will save valuable time and resources.

"Flooding, and its devastating effects, is a pressing issue here in Mamaroneck. State Senator Shelley Mayer has been a tireless champion for our community," Elkind Eney said. "I am delighted that the NYS Senate passed her proposed legislation to create a State Office of Flooding Prevention and Mitigation. This Office will provide critical tools in improving the lives of our residents, as well as many residents throughout New York State."

Jirandy Martinez, Executive Director of the Community Resource Center, a group lauded for helping to coordinate the response to Ida said that recent events show why the establishment of the statewide office to coordinate flood policies and responses is so timely.

"The aftermath of Hurricane Ida in 2021 highlighted the urgent necessity for proactive measures to safeguard our community," Martinez said. "This represents a significant step forward for Mamaroneck and the larger region, and we are thrilled about the positive impact it will have on our community."

Read the article here: <https://patch.com/new-york/larchmont/bill-creating-cabinet-level-flood-prevention-office-passes-ny-senate>