Senator Hoylman-Sigal Honors Chelsea's Maryam Banikarim with New York State Senate "Woman of Distinction" Award

SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL   May 14, 2025

BHS Maryam Banikarim Woman of Distinction 2025

NEW YORK — State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal named Maryam Banikarim of the West Side of Manhattan as the New York Senate's 2025 "Woman of Distinction" for District 47. Sponsored each year by the New York State Senate, the Woman of Distinction award highlights the essential role women play throughout New York State and honors those that have "greatly enriched the quality of life in their communities and beyond."

Ms. Banikarim traveled to Albany on May 13 for the official celebration, at which she and women from each of the sixty-three Senate districts in New York State were honored.

Ms. Banikarim founded the non-profit NYCNext at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic to bring people together at a time when the world was so disconnected. As part of NYCNext she established "The Longest Table,"a free-to-all outdoor potluck to help build community centered around sharing a meal with your neighbors. Last summer, the event was attended by over one thousand New Yorkers, and each year The Longest Table is replicated in cities across the country.

Ms. Banikarim's first project with NYCNext's was a series of outdoor pop-up performances in New York City meant to bring joy and entertainment to New Yorkers socially distancing themselves during the pandemic. The performances featured award winning Broadway stars, TV personalities and musicians. Through NYCNext Ms. Banikarim also produced an Emmy-winning video version of Billy Joel's "NY State of Mind" to help encourage the city's recovery from the pandemic and drive civic engagement. In 2023, Ms. Banikarim continued her work of re-energizing New Yorkers in the wake of the pandemic by leading the award-winning WE(love)NYC campaign for The Partnership for New York City and through her TED talk: "Life's an obstacle course - here's how to navigate it."

Prior to her work in civic engagement Ms. Banikarim built a highly successful career in the business world. Her achievements have been recognized in industry lists such as Marketers that Matter's "Visionaries," New York Post's "50 Most Powerful Women in NYC," Fast Company's "Top 10 Disruptors," and Advertising Age's "Women to Watch." In addition to her professional accomplishments, Banikarim has received numerous honors recognizing her commitment to serving the broader community, including the prestigious Ellis Island Medal and the Columbia Alumni Medal.

Banikarim holds degrees from Barnard College, Columbia Business School, and Columbia's School of International Affairs and has given the commencement speech at the Columbia Business School graduation ceremony.

Senator Hoylman-Sigal said: "During the height of the pandemic, when her city and neighborhood needed her most, Maryam Banikarim was there. From producing free Broadway street performances, to creating the inspiring New York State of Mind video, to establishing her now famous Longest Table initiative, Ms. Banikarim's dedication to

connecting and uplifting her neighbors serves as an inspiration to us all. Maryam Banikarim represents the very best of the West Side of Manhattan, and I'm so proud to bestow upon her the honor of the New York Senate's 2025 Woman of Distinction for the 47th District."

Maryam Banikarim said: "I am deeply honored to join so many remarkable women at the Senate's Women of Distinction celebration. I am proud of The Longest Table, a free potluck event that brings neighbors together on an open street in Chelsea to connect, share food, and build community. This event would not be possible without the support of our amazing neighbors, and it's inspiring to see how this simple idea has grown into a movement, with Longest Tables now happening across the city, country, and around the world. Andy and I are grateful to call Chelsea home and to give back to the city that has given us so much. Thank you to Senator Hoylman-Sigal for this incredible honor and opportunity."