



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jen Metzger

Senators Metzger, Kavanagh, and Persaud Convene Roundtable Discussion on Housing Insecurity and Homelessness in the Hudson Valley

JEN METZGER March 14, 2020

| ISSUE: **HOUSING INSECURITY AND HOMELESSNESS, HUDSON VALLEY**

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Sullivan County, NY...Senators Jen Metzger (SD-42), Brian Kavanagh (SD-26, and Chair of the Housing Committee), and Roxanne Persaud (SD-19, Chair of the Social Services Committee) convened a roundtable discussion on housing insecurity and homelessness in the Hudson Valley this week, together with 16 representatives of county agencies and community-based organizations working locally to help housing insecure and homeless individuals and families.

"Homelessness is a real and growing problem in our region, and we are seeing a worrisome increase in homelessness among whole families," **said Senator Metzger**. "If we are to address these issues effectively, we have to understand the underlying causes and the barriers to ending homelessness and housing insecurity in our rural communities and small cities. At the roundtable, we had a very productive discussion on a wide range of issues, including affordable housing shortages and local housing policies, lack of public transportation, overly burdensome restrictions on access to state housing funds, and the need to address concurrent issues that homeless individuals may face, such as substance abuse and mental health disorders. Importantly, we absolutely have to break the stigma associated with homelessness and housing insecurity, and recognize that in today's economy, there are many working people that do not make a livable wage and are unable to afford market-rate housing. Investments in more affordable housing in our rural communities is absolutely critical."

"More immediately, we are very concerned about the impacts of COVID-19 on the economy, and need to make sure that we have an adequate safety net in place to prevent an increase in housing and food insecurity," **said Senator Metzger**.

"Thursday we had the opportunity to hear from those directly involved in preventing homelessness," **said Senator Brian Kavanagh (SD-26 and Chair of the Senate Housing Committee)**.

"As our conversation demonstrated, far too many New Yorkers experience homelessness, and the consequences of housing instability for individuals, families, and society as a whole are far reaching. Fortunately, we also heard about workable solutions and resources the state could make available that would promptly begin to improve the situation, including support for rental subsidies to get people into stable, permanent housing as well as service-rich transitional programs. I thank the organizations and individuals who shared their expertise and insights, and Senators Metzger and Persaud for their great leadership in this area. I look

forward to continuing our work together to ensure that no New Yorker is denied access to safe, permanent housing.”

“Senator Metzger, Senator Kavanagh, and I received invaluable perspectives on New York’s state-wide homelessness and housing affordability crisis, particularly through the lens of rural communities,” **said Senator Roxanne J. Persaud (SD-19, Chair of the Social Services Committee)**. “In speaking with several local social service commissioners, legal service providers, non-profit and faith-based shelter service providers, we heard a resounding compassionate message: the needs in rural communities are just like anywhere else and there is a strong unified network of service providers. Geographic barriers create a greater challenge for homeless New Yorkers and service providers alike. I look forward to continued work with my colleagues on a stronger statewide policy to address homelessness.”

Organizations and agencies that participated in the roundtable discussion included representatives from Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, Monticello Community Hub, New Beginnings House of Worship, Orange County Department of Social Services, Rural Development Advisory Corp (RDAC), RUPCO, Saint Paul’s United Methodist Church, Sullivan 180, Sullivan BOCES, Sullivan County Community Services, Sullivan County’s Department of Family Services, Sullivan County Federation for the Homeless, Sullivan County Human Rights Commission, Ulster County Community Action, Ulster Habitat for Humanity, and WestCOP Housing and Veterans Resources were present to participate in the conversation.