



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

NY Senate Passes Serrano Bills to Reduce Health Disparities, Expand Access to Recreation, and Support Historic Businesses

JOSE M. SERRANO July 21, 2020



Today the New York State Senate passed four bills sponsored by Senator José M. Serrano to improve public health and eliminate health disparities, protect public parkland, expand access to recreation for seniors, and support historic businesses in our communities.

Combating Health Disparities in the Bronx

Serrano Bill S1557, passed today by the New York State Senate, mandates the New York State Department of Health to conduct an intensive study on the alarmingly high asthma rates in

the Bronx and to use the findings to create a comprehensive remedial plan. The legislation requires that key components of the Bronx's asthma epidemic be scrutinized, including high risk neighborhoods, disparities in income, race and ethnicity, public and private housing, proximity to major sources of air pollution, and the effectiveness of existing medical facilities.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined deep social inequalities and systemic flaws that cause minority groups to face glaring health disparities,” said Senator Serrano. “The rates of asthma in the Bronx are three times higher than the national average. By requiring the Department of Health to conduct a thorough study on the incidence of asthma in our communities, we can develop a remedial plan that addresses the root causes of a public health crisis that we have been fighting against for far too long.”

Supporting Historic & Longstanding Businesses

Serrano bill S7274B, which passed both the Senate and Assembly today, Establishes a historic business preservation registry within the office of parks, recreation and historic preservation for historic businesses that have operated for at least fifty years and that have contributed to their communities' history. In addition, businesses on the registry would be provided with educational and promotional assistance ensure their continued viability and success.

“New York’s longstanding businesses are woven into the fabric of our communities and have shaped our city’s heritage and history,” said Senator Serrano. “Rising costs and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic mean many of these historic businesses are struggling to stay open. This legislation will provide promotional and educational assistance to help them endure and adapt as we recover from the current health crisis.”

Expanding Recreational Opportunities for Seniors

Serrano bill S7765 creates a New York Senior Trail Guide that identifies walking and hiking opportunities for active seniors in State Parks, DEC managed lands, and along public, non-motorized multi-use trails. This bill creates an easily accessible resource for active seniors seeking appropriately graded walking and hiking routes across the state.

"There is significant scientific evidence showing the physical and mental health benefits of an active lifestyle- especially among older New Yorkers," said Senator Serrano. "New York's State Park system offers vast recreational opportunities for active seniors and this bill would create a curated listing of walking and hiking trails for exercise, sightseeing and general well-being, so that they can discover and enjoy the natural wonders of our State Parks."

Protecting Public Parkland

Serrano bill S180 establishes a program by the office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to review any cases of alienation of municipal parkland. The legislation ensures that no parkland is lost or discontinued without a compelling public need, where no other alternative is available.

"When a piece of parkland is lost, it is almost impossible to recover," said Senator Serrano. "Parks are essential to the quality of life and economic vitality of communities, and provide recreational opportunities for both New Yorkers and visitors. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the importance of our outdoor spaces to our physical and mental health. This bill ensures that no parkland is lost unless there is a dire public need."