



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

# Community & Reopening Update 9-17-2020

[Shelley B. Mayer](#)

September 17, 2020

ISSUE:

- [September 11th Remembrance Day](#)
- [Unemployment Insurance](#)
- [Child Care](#)
- [gardening](#)

# COMMUNITY & REOPENING UPDATE 9-17-2020



Dear Friends:

I hope families are settling into back-to-school plans smoothly. As school buildings reopen in our new normal, we must be extra vigilant to continue the best practices that helped our region and the state control the spread of the virus. Please wear a mask when you cannot socially distance, wash your hands often, and limit your exposure to others outside of your home without masks, especially at large gatherings. We are not out of the woods yet, and we must continue to do our part to control the spread of COVID-19.

This past week, I was glad to speak with the Tuckahoe & Larchmont Village Boards and give them an update on new legislation and other matters important to local residents. I also joined Assemblymember David Buchwald with SUNY Purchase members of the United University Professions union for a Virtual Town Hall to discuss funding for higher education and a safe reopening of college campuses, among other virtual and community events.

My office is pleased to welcome its newest member, Maryanne Joyce, who will serve as the Director of Constituent Services & Associate Counsel. Maryanne joins our office after years working as a legal services attorney in the Bronx and an active

community volunteer in Westchester. You can reach her at [mjoyce@nysenate.gov](mailto:mjoyce@nysenate.gov).

## **NEW BILLS TO ADDRESS STORM OUTAGE RESPONSE FAILURES**

My colleagues and I have not forgotten about the disastrous response to Tropical Storm Isaias by utility & telecommunications providers, and we are working on new legislation to change the way these companies operate. On Wednesday, September 16th, the Journal News published an [OpEd](#) I wrote about new legislation that I am sponsoring and co-sponsoring. [Click here to read the OpEd.](#)

I heard loud and clear from my constituents after the storm: this time, we must take meaningful action to make sure this disastrous storm response performance does not repeat itself. Legislation that I am introducing works to fundamentally change the business model of these companies to force them to respond more proactively to protect our communities in major weather events. In addition, these proposals would strengthen the Public Service Commission (PSC) to make it a more effective protector of the public's interest. The bills include:

- increasing penalties for electricity service reliability violations to be five times higher than current amounts. This will give the PSC more disciplinary power, and promises stiffer punishment should these companies fail us again;
- removing the requirement that public service law violations must be “knowing” violations. This will make clear to utilities that they cannot wiggle out of violations by claiming they were unaware of the problem. Furthermore, extending this high standard to officers will mean they have substantially more skin in the game;
- requiring cable and phone companies to implement publicly available emergency response plans; and
- increasing the number of PSC commissioners, requiring that at least two commissioners have consumer protection credentials, and that commissioners represent the diversity of New York State.

Though our power, internet and phones are back on, we will not forget the terrible response by our utility & telecommunications providers. My colleagues and I are committed to structural changes, and I will make sure to keep you updated as legislation progresses.

## **NEW YORK FORWARD:**

- [Click here](#) for an updated list of states on the travel advisory requiring individuals who travel to New York from those states to quarantine for 14 days.
- The Special Enrollment Period for uninsured New Yorkers will be extended through December 31, 2020. New Yorkers can apply for coverage through NY State of Health online at [nystateofhealth.ny.gov](https://nystateofhealth.ny.gov).

## **TEMPORARY LOST WAGES ASSISTANCE (LWA) PROGRAM BEGINS THIS WEEK**

The Federal Lost Wages Assistance Program will begin funding a \$300 weekly payment to all Unemployment Insurance (UI) recipients across the State, including recipients of the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (FPUA) that covered workers not traditionally eligible for UI, including self-employed and gig economy workers. The 3 payments of \$300 per week will be retroactive to August 1, the day after the \$600 FPUC payments ended. New York State may be eligible for additional LWA payments after the funds for those three weeks have been disbursed. Please contact my office at (914) 934-5250 or [smayer@nysenate.gov](mailto:smayer@nysenate.gov) if you are having trouble receiving your Unemployment Insurance or Lost Wages Assistance Program payments.

## **COMMEMORATING THE 19TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SEPTEMBER 11TH ATTACKS**

Honored to attend a ceremony at the Conor Park 9/11 Memorial site in Yonkers with Westchester County Legislator David Tubiolo, Dan Romano, Yonkers City Councilmember Anthony Merante, Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano, Yonkers City Council President Mike Khader, Yonkers City Councilmember Mike Breen, Yonkers City Councilmember John Rubbo, President of the McLean Avenue Merchants Association Henry Djonbalaj. (Photo credit: Donna Davis)

Volunteer New York 9/11 Serve & Remember: Don Bosco Community Center food collection drive in Port Chester. (Photo credit: Stan Sheppard)

Volunteer New York 9/11 Serve & Remember: Thomas H. Slater food collection drive in White Plains.

19 years later, September 11th still leaves a terrible hole in all of our hearts. We mourn and honor the memory of those lost on that day, or thereafter, as a result of

that terrible attack on our nation. Like so many others, I feel an obligation to treat this as a sacred day, even in our current pandemic. On the anniversary, I was honored to attend several ceremonies and speak at others for remote viewing.

For the past several years, I have also joined Volunteer New York as they honor this day with the spirit of service. I spent the day lending a hand at food collection drives in White Plains and Port Chester as part of the 10th Annual Volunteer New York 9/11: Serve & Remember community-wide action event.

Earlier this Summer, I announced my Garden Contest to ask us to look for the beauty around us during this challenging time and to recognize the work of local gardeners who add so much beauty to our communities. Thank you to the many of you who submitted gorgeous photos of your home & community gardens. It was a delight to hear about how many of you found gardening during the pandemic, how you have been sharing your vegetable harvest with neighbors & friends, and the quality family time you're spending with your hands in the dirt. Special recognition goes to several gardens growing food and donating it to local food pantries, including Sugar Hill Farm in Bedford Hills operated by the Westchester Land Trust, the Knapp House Garden in Rye, and the Bronxville Giving Garden in Bronxville.

My office has compiled a slideshow of all of the submissions for this year's Garden Contest, and it is [available to watch here](#). I will announce the winners of the contest in the next week.

## **ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS THROUGHOUT THE HUDSON VALLEY**

On Thursday, September 10th, I was proud to join Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, Senator Pete Harckham and other distinguished guests at the Mount Kisco Child Care Center as Lieutenant Governor Hochul announced \$4.5 million in funding for child care providers in the Hudson Valley as well as additional funding opportunities. Grateful to Governor Andrew Cuomo and our Federal Delegation for securing these funds as part of the CARES Act. Affordable, accessible, quality child care is essential to our economic recovery. Child care providers may apply for the funding at <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/>. Applications will be posted later this month and will be accepted on a rolling basis until December 31, 2020.

## **BLOOD DRIVE CO-SPONSORED BY SENATOR SHELLEY MAYER & THE TOWN OF MAMARONECK**

On October 2nd, I am pleased to co-sponsor a Blood Drive with the American Red Cross & the Town of Mamaroneck. Donating blood is essential to community health and the need for blood is constant. Donations are by appointment only. I encourage those who are healthy to make an appointment to donate.

Visit [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) to schedule an appointment. Masks and social distancing will be required and observed.

### **BLOOD DRIVE**

**Friday, October 2nd, 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM**

**Hommocks Park Ice Rink**

**140 Hommocks Road, Larchmont, NY 10538**

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As always, feel free to contact my office at (914) 934-5250 or [smayer@nysenate.gov](mailto:smayer@nysenate.gov) if there is an issue with which we can offer assistance.

Kind regards,

Shelley B. Mayer

State Senator

37th District