



Nov. 18, 2025

Chairpersons Bailey, Kavanagh, and Skoufis, and members of the Insurance; Housing, Construction and Community Development; and Investigations and Government Operations committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Professional Insurance Agents of New York State. PIANY represents independent insurance agents and brokers across the state—licensed professionals who help New Yorkers navigate a residential insurance market that is becoming increasingly difficult to access and afford.

Let's begin with the core issue: People want to be protected—not just compensated. Even the best insurance policy cannot replace the loss of a home, belongings, or the sense of safety after a disaster. Homeowners would much rather prevent a loss than receive an insurance claims check. Safer properties mean fewer displacements, less trauma, and more stable communities.

Safe homes also mean more affordable and available insurance. Improving the risk profile of our housing stock is one of the most powerful steps we can take to address both consumer vulnerability and insurance market strain.

Today, too many New Yorkers—especially in coastal and urban communities—are facing skyrocketing premiums, shrinking coverage, or are being dropped altogether. Independent agents are doing everything we can to help them stay protected, but options are increasingly limited.

We believe there's a path forward—and it begins with risk reduction.

Let me share a real-world example. Many insurers are now reluctant to write or renew policies for homes with roofs over 20 years old—even if the roof is still functional. One response might be to mandate coverage in these cases. But that approach could further drive up premiums across the board or reduce insurer participation altogether.

A better approach? Incentivize upgrades. Imagine a program that provides tax credits or low-interest loans to help homeowners replace aging roofs with storm-resistant materials. This protects families during weather events and improves insurability—leading to more carrier competition and lower premiums.

Importantly, New York already has a foundation to build on. Programs like the Resilient Retrofits program, led by Homes and Community Renewal, are helping income-eligible homeowners in flood-prone

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areas retrofit their homes to reduce risk. And the New York State Energy Research Development Authority already supports energy-efficiency upgrades that can improve weather resilience.

But these programs are narrowly targeted—often income-limited or focused only on flood zones. We urge the Legislature to expand and adapt these efforts to address broader risks and housing segments:

- Include roof replacements and storm-resistant materials as eligible retrofits under Resilient Retrofits or create a parallel track focused on aging infrastructure.
- Add insurance-related incentives—such as premium credits or underwriting flexibility tied to completed mitigation work.
- Widen eligibility criteria to include moderate-income households and areas vulnerable to wind, aging housing stock, or urban liability risks—not just flood zones.
- Coordinate with insurers to ensure that completed improvements result in real premium savings or increased market access.

Beyond retrofit programs, we encourage the Legislature to consider:

- Community-wide investments in drainage, fire barriers, and other public infrastructure that lowers systemic risk.
- Consumer education on insurance literacy and loss-prevention upgrades—many low-cost improvements, like sump pumps or tree trimming, can make a meaningful difference.
- Regulatory flexibility that allows insurers to offer tiered deductibles, resilience endorsements, or discounts for mitigation.

These are win-win strategies. They reduce losses, protect lives, and help stabilize the insurance market so homeowners can get the coverage they need at a price they can afford.

In addition to mitigation-focused solutions, we urge the Legislature to consider broader structural reforms that address affordability and expand access to coverage for New Yorkers. Streamlining the Department of Financial Services' rate and form approval processes is essential. Currently, delays—often stemming from staffing shortages—impede insurers' ability to respond to market changes, discouraging participation and limiting the introduction of new products that could meet evolving risks. I often hear from agents, licensed in multiple states, that New York is often the last state to approve new insurance products. Modernizing the DFS's workflows and addressing staffing gaps would enhance consumer choice and market stability.

Rising litigation costs—driven by third-party lawsuit financing and social inflation—are escalating premiums and prompting some insurers to withdraw from the market. Slip-and-fall claims and pre-litigation settlements are especially problematic, leading to stricter underwriting standards and nonrenewals. We recommend that the Legislature pursue targeted tort reforms to reduce legal abuse and provide greater predictability in liability exposure, ultimately benefiting policyholders across the state.

Increasing transparency around underwriting criteria and catastrophe modeling practices is crucial. Consumers and agents currently lack insight into how these factors affect insurability and pricing, which undermines trust and limits the impact of mitigation efforts. The Legislature should promote clear communication of eligibility criteria for discounts and underwriting flexibility tied to resilience

investments, establish standardized premium discounts for verified mitigation upgrades (such as roof replacements, flood protection, and electrical system improvements), and encourage insurers to make these incentives more consistent and accessible.

PIANY's members stand ready to help. Independent agents are embedded in every corner of this state. We're already advising clients on how to reduce risk and find coverage. With the right tools and partnerships, we can do even more.

We thank the committees for your leadership and urge you to support policies that reward resilience, leverage existing programs, and promote public-private collaboration. Together, we can ensure that every New Yorker has access to affordable, reliable insurance—and a safer place to call home.

Thank you.