

For Immediate Release: April 28, 2026

Contact: Amanda Stout-Parker | aparker@nysenate.gov | 518-455-2415

New York Senate Majority Advances Legislation to Strengthen Protections for Crime Victims and Survivors

Measures Expand Resources and Support During Sexual Assault
Awareness Month

(Albany, N.Y.) Today, the New York State Senate Majority is advancing legislation to protect the safety and privacy of crime victims and support survivors of domestic and sexual violence. The bills in today's package build on our legislative efforts from last year, including legislation we passed, enacted in October during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, that requires law enforcement responding to reports of domestic and family violence to temporarily remove firearms from the possession of accused defendants pending court action. We remain committed to further strengthening New York's criminal laws to protect survivors from retaliation and support them on their healing journey, ensuring they have access to the resources they need to rebuild their lives, empower themselves and thrive.

This package includes legislation that would expand the definition of the offense of aggravated harassment in the second degree, foster the adoption and implementation of co-sheltering friendly housing models, permit pension beneficiary status changes upon conviction, and allow domestic violence survivors to opt out of or be released from a shared contract without penalty.

In addition, as April marks Sexual Assault Awareness Month, it includes legislation that would prevent using the voluntary intoxication of a victim as a defense in sex related crimes and raise awareness of New York's Address Confidentiality Program to ensure the privacy of crime victims and survivors of sexual assault.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, "We know it is not only critical that survivors of domestic violence have access to the resources they need, but that they are fully informed of the options available to them. While we have taken steps in recent years to strengthen protections, including efforts to bolster our gun laws for those experiencing domestic violence, too many survivors still face unnecessary barriers when seeking help. The package we are advancing today builds on that progress by raising awareness of available resources, strengthening financial and privacy protections, and closing gaps in our laws that have too often prevented survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault from receiving the justice they deserve. I thank today's bill sponsors for their unwavering commitment to advocating on behalf of all crime victims and supporting survivors on their road to recovery."

Chair of the Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Committee, Senator Julia Salazar said, “Too often, the processes put in place to help survivors of crime are riddled with red tape and arbitrary obstacles. I'm grateful that today's legislative package includes three bills of mine that will make it easier, not harder, for survivors to transition back into normalcy. Currently, if victims use crowdfunding sources like GoFundMe, they often do not receive the full compensation they are owed from New York. The Survivors First Act (S.458A) eliminates this barrier. In addition, Senate Bill 156A will rightfully increase the amount of compensation owed to victims so that they can better restore stability in their lives. Lastly, Notification of Address Confidentiality (S.8628), will ensure sexual assault survivors know how to make their addresses confidential, enabling them to rebuild their lives without fear of being located by their abusers.”

The legislation being passed by the Senate Democratic Majority includes:

- **Ensures Necessary Compensation for Dispossessed Crime Victims:** This bill, S.156A, sponsored by Senator Salazar, defines the terms “essential personal property” and “property necessary and essential to the welfare of the victim” in the context of determining awards for crime victims who have lost their property, in order to ensure they receive accurate compensation to restore stability to their lives and allow them to return to their basic standard of living.
- **Enacts the Survivors First Act:** This bill, S.4584A, sponsored by Senator Salazar, expands access to and facilitates the equitable administration of state victim compensation funds by requiring the Office of Victim Services to distribute information concerning their existence, to disclose specific data about crime victim services programs, to establish an outreach plan, and to disregard certain kinds of funding as collateral sources historically used to reduce compensation for victims.
- **Notifies Crime Victims of the Address Confidentiality Program:** This bill, S.8628, sponsored by Senator Salazar, requires the Office of Victim Services to notify victims of crime and of sexual offenses of the Address Confidentiality Program.
- **Extends Emergency Priority for Public Housing to Domestic Violence Survivors:** This bill, S.871, sponsored by Senator Bailey, would require statewide housing authorities that have established waiting list preferences, and which are reviewing applicants, to grant domestic violence survivors the same preference granted to prioritized populations. It would also establish a standardized definition of domestic violence to determine whether an applicant is eligible to qualify as a member of that prioritized group.
- **Creates an Opt-out Structure for Crime Victim Notifications:** This bill, S.6814, sponsored by Senator Bailey, creates automatic phone or email notifications to victims, witnesses, relatives of those victims and witnesses who are minors, and relatives of homicide victims. The information to be notified on includes arrests, initial court appearances, custody releases, and information on the judicial proceedings. The bill also creates a right for the crime victim or surviving family to be notified on the person's release from state custody, parole board interviews, and the crime victim's right to provide a victim impact statement to the parole board.

- **Equips Survivors with Information to Prevent Cyber Stalking and Electronic Harassment:** This bill, S.8045, sponsored by Senator Bynoe, would require the Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence to provide informational materials to survivors of domestic violence on how to remove abusers from smart home electronic systems to protect themselves against cyber harassment and stalking.
- **Removes the ‘Voluntary Intoxication’ Exclusion:** This bill, S.54A, sponsored by Senator Fernandez, would prohibit using the voluntary intoxication of a victim as a defense in sex crimes, and establish a legal standard that a person who is voluntarily intoxicated can be incapable of consent.
- **Expands the Definition of Aggravated Harassment in the Second Degree:** This bill, S.2273, sponsored by Senator Krueger, would include forms of contact such as text, private message, direct message, and email, as well as other methods of electronic communication, in the definition of the offense of aggravated harassment in the second degree.
- **Promotes the Implementation of Co-sheltering Models:** This bill, S.7612, sponsored by Senator Martinez, would direct the Office of Temporary Disability Assistance in consultation with the Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence to establish a co-shelter toolkit of best practices, resources, case studies and other information deemed helpful to inform and encourage the adoption and implementation of co-sheltering friendly models to accommodate victims of domestic violence and people experiencing homelessness who have companion animals.
- **Protects Domestic Violence Survivors in Shared Contracts:** This bill, S.2416, sponsored by Senator Parker, would allow individuals who are under a shared contract to opt-out and be released of such contract without charges or penalties due to their status as a survivor of domestic violence.
- **Establishes a Forfeiture of Beneficiary’s Rights Upon Domestic Violence Conviction:** This bill, S.6750, sponsored by Senator Webb, would permit the removal of named beneficiaries, who commit and are convicted of a family offense against a state or city retiree, preventing them from collecting the victims pension benefits.

Bill sponsor Senator Jamaal Bailey said, “Protecting survivors of domestic violence requires a comprehensive legislative framework that prioritizes their stability, safety, and right to information. This slate of bills, including two of my own, is meant to ensure that survivors receive the same emergency priority in public housing as other vulnerable populations, provide survivors with the transparency they deserve, and protect the safety and right to clarity to those who need help during extremely difficult times. I am proud to join the Senate Democratic Majority in advancing this package to provide survivors with the protections and peace of mind necessary to rebuild their lives.”

Bill sponsor Senator Siela Bynoe said, "As technology becomes more integrated into our homes, we must confront the reality that abusers can exploit these tools to control, harass, and intimidate survivors. My bill, S.8045, ensures that victims of domestic violence have clear, accessible information on how to protect themselves, whether by understanding how smart home devices are being misused or by removing an abuser’s access entirely. By including this

legislation in the Senate's Domestic Violence Awareness Package, we recognize that vulnerability can be embedded in the very technology meant to keep us safe. This bill would give survivors the tools they need to reclaim their security and independence in the digital age."

Bill sponsor Senator Nathalia Fernandez said, "Intoxication is not consent, and our laws should not treat it that way. This legislation ensures New Yorkers are protected from sexual assault while holding perpetrators accountable. We must continue updating outdated laws to reflect reality and deliver justice for survivors."

Bill sponsor Senator Liz Krueger said, "Harassment is harassment, whether it happens over the phone or via text. The effect on the victim is the same, and they deserve protection. I thank my colleagues in the Senate for taking action to close this loophole."

Bill sponsor Senator Monica Martinez said, "Despite the dangers of staying, some victims of domestic violence won't leave if it means leaving behind a pet. Perpetrators exploit this, putting both victims and their animals at risk and trapping them in abusive situations. My legislation gives people escaping domestic violence or facing homelessness more options, and I thank the Senate for advancing this proposal."

Bill sponsor Senator Kevin Parker said, "Survivors of domestic violence should never be trapped in contracts that bind them to harm. This legislation is about restoring power, dignity, and choice no one should have to choose between their safety and their financial stability. And this entire package sends a clear message: we are standing up for survivors, holding systems accountable, and doing the hard work to make sure people have a real chance to rebuild their lives."

Bill sponsor Senator Lea Webb said, "Public safety and well-being are key issues that we must equitably support as a community and state. As Chair of the Women's Issues Committee, it is my priority to pass policies to ensure survivors of domestic violence get the support they need to heal and rebuild. My legislation restores justice and gives survivors the power to protect their financial future. Under current law, once a retired member elects a beneficiary for their pension option, that designation is locked in for life. This bill allows retirees to revoke pension benefits from a beneficiary who has been convicted of a family offense, including domestic violence. I thank the Majority Leader for putting forth this important package and supporting survivors across New York."

NYSCADV's Executive Director Connie Neal said, "By supporting legislation that enhances safety and expands services, legislators can ensure survivors have the support they need to heal and move forward. We are grateful to Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Senators Bailey, Fernandez, Krueger, Martinez, Parker, Salazar and Webb for their leadership in introducing these critical pieces of legislation and shepherding them through the legislative process. We urge Assembly Speaker Heastie to bring these bills to the Assembly floor for a vote as soon as possible this legislative session."

Vice President of Government Affairs, Safe Horizon Michael Polenberg said, "Safe Horizon applauds the efforts of the New York State Senate to implement legislation that prioritizes the

safety and healing of survivors of crime and abuse. We vigorously advocate for survivors' voices to be heard. This legislation embodies the resources they have been championing for years. We are deeply grateful to Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for spearheading efforts to hold abusers accountable in New York State and to ensure survivors know there is a genuine pathway to justice.”

###

New York State Senate | senatedemocraticmajority@nysenate.gov | 518-455-2415