



NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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Senate Majority Advances Legislation to Protect Elder New Yorkers

(Albany, NY) Today, the Senate Democratic Majority advanced legislation to support and protect the rights of elder New Yorkers. This package will prohibit termination of tenancy in certain senior housing facilities, establish the Office of Older Adult Workforce, encourage entrepreneurship for seniors, establish an elder abuse aftercare program, and protect consumers with the creation of the State Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate. These bills will also require elder abuse training for senior service providers, the public posting of a senior trail guide, expanding Medicare eligibility, and will raise the income eligibility limit for rent increase exemptions.

“Our state’s seniors deserve to age in dignity and have their rights protected,” **Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins** said. “Elder abuse, neglect, or exploitation cannot be tolerated, we must do everything we can to raise awareness and educate the public. I am proud to sponsor legislation to better protect aging New Yorkers, and I thank my colleagues in the Senate Majority for their dedication to ensure the senior community has access to the services and support they need to prosper.”

Bill Sponsor, and Chair of the Senate Committee on Aging, Senator Rachel May, said, “As Chair of the Committee on Aging, I am very grateful to my colleagues for their work to protect older New Yorkers’ health and safety and help them stay active longer. This package of bills supports affordable senior housing, expands access to affordable prescription drugs, recognizes the need to prevent elder abuse, and creates opportunities for work and recreation. My bills acknowledge that more people are staying in the workforce longer, often starting new businesses late in life, and they may need assistance in navigating the new realities of commerce and employment.”

The legislation passed by the Senate Majority, includes:

- **Senior Housing Protections:** This bill, [S.1106](#), sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, prohibits the termination of tenancy in housing facilities, with 20 or more units, occupied by senior citizens and/or persons with disabilities without cause or court approval.
- **Office of Older Adult Workforce:** This bill, [S.555A](#), sponsored by Senator Rachel May, will establish an Office of Older Adult Workforce Development within the State Office

for the Aging to provide support and services addressing the needs of older adults in the workplace.

- **Encore Entrepreneurs:** This bill, [S.554](#), sponsored by Senator Rachel May, will direct the Office for the Aging and the Department of Economic Development to expand encore entrepreneurship in the state to empower individuals fifty years of age or older to become first time business owners.
- **Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate:** This bill, [S.4884](#), sponsored by Senator Diane Savino, will establish an independent Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate to advocate for residential utility consumers at both state and federal proceedings.
- **Elder Abuse Shelter Aftercare Demonstration Program:** This bill, [S.1065](#), sponsored by Senator Alessandra Biaggi, will establish an elder abuse shelter aftercare pilot program to evaluate the effectiveness and potential to expand temporary elder abuse shelters.
- **Elder Abuse Prevention Training:** This bill, [S.5196B](#), sponsored by Senator James Sanders Jr. directs the State Office of the Aging to develop elder abuse prevention training that includes elder abuse detection, reporting, and counseling. Senior service providers are required to take the training and receive supplemental refresher training every 3 years.
- **Senior Trail Guide:** This bill, [S.6208](#), sponsored by Senator Jose M. Serrano mandates the public posting of a senior trail guide that identifies walking and hiking opportunities for active seniors within the state park system and along public non-motorized multi-use trails within the state.
- **Expanding Medicare Eligibility:** This bill, [S.2535A](#), sponsored by Senator Gustavo Rivera will allow individuals who have comparable coverage to a Medicare Part D plan to also be eligible for EPIC if they otherwise qualify.
- **Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption:** This bill, [S.4216](#), sponsored by Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, will raise the income eligibility limits for the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and the Disabled Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) program to \$55,000 beginning July 1, 2021. These programs exempt low income seniors and people with disabilities from rent increases that could lead to them losing their homes.

Bill Sponsor, Senator Alessandra Biaggi said, “We always have an obligation to look after our elders, especially when they find themselves in vulnerable and traumatic situations. Elder abuse is tragically widespread, and it is imperative that our seniors have access to help and resources if they are ever facing abuse or neglect. Creating the nation’s first temporary elder abuse shelter here in the Bronx will allow New York State to lead in determining how best to keep our elders safe, and set an example for the entire country. I am proud to sponsor this legislation and thank Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins for prioritizing this legislation.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Gustavo Rivera said, “The Senate Majority continues to pass legislation to provide our seniors the protections they need and deserve. As Chair of the Health Committee, I am proud to sponsor a bill to allow additional New Yorkers to access affordable coverage for their medications through EPIC. Our seniors have been affected tremendously by this pandemic and these bills go a long way to provide them the relief they deserve.”

Bill Sponsor, Senator Diane Savino said, "Currently, 40 states and the District of Columbia have protections in place for utility customers. It is time for New York to do the same, especially in the wake of Superstorm Sandy, Hurricane Irene, and Tropical Storm Lee. Creating an independent Office of the Utility Consumer Advocate will give New Yorkers real representation when it comes to utility services, and I am proud to sponsor this legislation which will help so many people across the state."

Bill Sponsor, Senator James Sanders Jr. said, "Our elders have given us so much. It is our duty to protect them because they are such a vulnerable population, which unfortunately makes them the victims of abuse and scams. The legislation that my colleagues and I are introducing targets such areas by increasing protections but also includes resources and services to improve the quality of life for our seniors."

Bill Sponsor, Senator Jose M. Serrano said, "There have been ample studies on the mental and physical health benefits of an active lifestyle, especially for older New Yorkers. There are a number of recreational opportunities for active seniors in our State Park system, and I'm proud to sponsor legislation that will create a curated listing of hiking and walking trails for sightseeing, exercise and general wellbeing, ensuring that older populations can enjoy and access the natural wonders of our State Parks and public lands."

Bill Sponsor, Senator Toby Ann Stavisky said, "SCRIE and DRIE are quite literally lifelines for thousands of our most vulnerable New Yorkers. This bill will allow localities such as the city of New York to raise the income eligibility limits to \$55,000 beginning July 1, 2021. It applies to those residing in rentals, Mitchell Lamas, co-ops and condos. People retire on a fixed income and, while expenses increase, housing costs will remain stable and the senior citizen can remain in their home. I thank Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins and my colleagues for supporting this legislation."

Senate Majority Deputy Leader, Senator Michael Gianaris, said, "The State Senate is dedicated to preserving the dignity and respect of our elders. This legislation would improve the lives of our seniors by providing support in housing facilities, helping those experiencing elder abuse, and enhancing worker protections. I am proud this legislation passed the Senate and commit to continuing to helping the most vulnerable New Yorkers."

Senator Jamaal Bailey said, "This package of legislation will safeguard elders and senior citizens in New York State through the granting of protections that guarantee rights and increase quality of life. The passage of these bills will see housing protections expanded for seniors in our state. Court approval will be needed to terminate residency for seniors or those with disabilities living in facilities with more than 20 units. Expanding the income eligibility for the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and the Disabled Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) programs guarantees that many seniors and disabled New Yorkers do not see rent increases force them to vacate their residences. We worked to ensure that necessary medicine is affordable and available to our seniors who need it. The development of Elder Abuse Prevention Training and the establishment of an elder abuse shelter aftercare pilot program will work to reduce instances of elder abuse and provide refuge and services to those who had to endure it. Expanding encore entrepreneurship in the state will empower those who are 50 and older to become first-time

business owners and create an expanded generation of business owners. Addressing the needs of seniors and older adults in New York State is extremely important and I would like to thank Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins for her leadership, as well as my colleagues who sponsored the pieces of legislation included in this package.“

Senator John Brooks said, “Senior citizens have spent their entire lives contributing to and bettering our communities. They have a right to be protected from the abuse and mistreatment that many are facing today. The legislation included in this package provides needed solutions to many problems facing older New Yorkers, including protections against elder abuse, housing protections, consumer protections, and more. I fully support these measures that will address many of the most pressing issues facing seniors in our state.”

Senator Jeremy Cooney said, “All New Yorkers deserve to live full lives. This suite of legislation will help protect seniors by keeping them in their homes, encouraging them to pursue their passion, stay in the workforce, and prioritize their health and safety. I am honored to be part of a Majority Conference that is committed to looking out for our most vulnerable communities.”

Senator Simcha Felder said, “I am honored to support and protect our seniors so that they remain active, independent and continue contributing to our families and communities. The bills we pass today will improve financial independence and health care, create a more age inclusive society and help seniors on fixed incomes enjoy their retirement years in the neighborhoods they know in the homes they created with love.”

Senator Pete Harckham said, “This new group of legislation will help ensure that residents can age safely and with dignity while also offering initiatives that can keep them in the workplace longer.”

Senator Brad Hoylman said, “Every single senior in New York should be able to age with dignity. This package of legislation will help keep seniors in their homes, create a pilot program for housing shelters singularly devoted to victims of senior abuse, and expand Medicare eligibility. Our elders are vital members of our communities, and I’m deeply grateful Senate Majority Leader Andrea-Stewart Cousins is committed to improving their quality of life.”

Senator Robert Jackson said, “Older New Yorkers are a growing population in our state with special needs that our policies must account for. Today’s legislation includes a framework to protect them from abuse or neglect, as well as to make sure they can take full advantage of all the benefits our great state has to offer. As someone who’s 70 years young myself, I am proud to pass this package of bills geared toward our elder New Yorkers today!”

Senator Tim Kennedy said, “As a state, we have an obligation to our senior citizens, both to protect them and empower them. I’m proud to join my colleagues in advancing this aggressive agenda targeted at improving the lives of New York’s seniors.”

Senator Liz Krueger said, “Older New Yorkers make up a rapidly growing proportion of our population, and we must make a concerted effort to address their needs effectively. From increasing housing and workforce protections to expanding healthcare and economic

opportunities, this package of bills takes important steps toward recognizing and addressing the chronically underserved needs of older adults in our state.”

Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, “I am pleased to pass legislation that addresses the many challenges seniors face. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed vulnerabilities, especially in nursing homes. Our seniors deserve to be protected. The legislative package we passed today provides necessary resources and support to allow them to remain active and in their home for as long as possible.”

Senator Sean Ryan said, “Elder abuse is a problem that, sadly, is often overlooked, and the pandemic has made the situation worse. In Western New York, legal service providers saw a significant increase in clients experiencing elder abuse throughout the last year. The bills passed today will support seniors in our state and help protect them from abuse, neglect, and predatory behavior.”

Senator Luis Sepúlveda said, “Over the next 40 years, Americans ages 65 and older will reach 80 million in 2040—more than doubling the current number. Older Americans remain in the workforce longer and face widening economic disparities, especially in our communities of color. As our population ages, we need to ensure that our seniors are protected throughout their golden years. This bill package would expand Medicare eligibility and senior housing protections, implement elder abuse prevention training for senior service providers and establish an Office of Older Adult Workforce Development within the State Office for the Aging. I am proud to support my Senate colleagues in expanding protections for elder New Yorkers.”

Senator James Skoufis said, “As our communities age and the needs of our elder friends, family, and neighbors continue to shift, we must ensure that New York's quality of life protections meet the moment. I am thrilled to join my majority colleagues in taking decisive steps to support our elder community at work and at home.”

Senator Kevin Thomas said, “The New York State Senate Majority is committed to supporting older adults and their families. I am proud to support this important package of legislation, which will strengthen protections against elder abuse and enhance quality of life for seniors across our state.”

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