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## **New York State Senator Luis R. Sepúlveda Champions Legislation to Achieve Real Systemic Change for the Bronx**

During the 2022 Legislative Session, my main focus has been to prioritize legislation that is of utmost importance to Bronxites and New Yorkers overall. I remain determined and committed to establish laws that have a real systemic change, improve the lives of our people, and respond to their immediate needs. For these reasons, I am proud to announce the bills I have introduced as my legislative priorities. These bills are grouped into four areas of interest: Reforming the Surrogate's Court; Police Protection and Gun Reforms; Expanding Housing Rights; and Immigrant and Economic Relief.

### *Surrogate's Court Reform Package of 2022*

The judicial system is often seen as a complex system to navigate, especially by people of color. The Surrogate's Court, in particular, presents an even greater challenge. Its main purpose is to hear cases involving the affairs of decedents including wills, estates, and trusts. Individuals without access to adequate resources often face disadvantages when having to present proceedings and get discouraged by the difficulty in these processes. That is why making our judicial system simpler, less bureaucratic, and fairer is a necessity. The Surrogate's Court Reform Package of 2022 consists of three bills which aim to make just that. The bills are:

- [S2110](#) would remove court clerks from decision-making on approvals or rejections of filings and instead uphold the responsibility to Surrogate's judges, who should have the ultimate authority in matters related to decisions on any such filings.
- [S2791](#) proposes an uniform fee of \$45.00 for motions in the Surrogate's Court to help generate much needed revenue for the Courts and to bring them in line with virtually every other court in the State of New York.
- [S3164](#) seeks to make it easier for a person to authorize a voluntary administrator for small estates valued under \$50,000.

### Police Protection and Gun Reforms

Police officers are, without a doubt, an integral part of our society. Upon intervention, body cameras provide the opportunity to not only guarantee the safety and security of both police officers and community members, but also ensure accountability from both parties. With this in mind, expanding the usage of body cameras and having access to the footage in reasonable time is essential.

On the other hand, I cannot stress enough that gun violence is an epidemic that is ravaging our neighborhoods. For far too long, victims of gun violence have had to endure the aftermath of being impacted by this horrendous act. During these acts, victims and their families are not able to hold gun manufacturers and distributors accountable and their suffering comes without any retributions.

- [S3806](#) would require police officers who are executing or involved in the execution of a warrant to wear body cameras at all times as a tool for their safety and the safety of the public.
- [S4352](#) would require police to make body camera recordings public within 30 days.
- [S8163](#) creates a civil cause of action for the manufacture, sale, or distribution of assault weapons or ghost guns within the State. This bill would help our State combat the epidemic of gun violence.

### Expanding Housing Rights

Housing rights need to be comprehensive enough to reach from the most underserved to those with access to stable housing. For example, people who have been paroled deserve an opportunity to rebuild and reintegrate their lives. By implementing practices such as having people paroled to a unit inside a correctional facility, the State lacks to provide the housing that formerly incarcerated individuals need to successfully re-integrate into society.

Conversely, there is no current statute that sufficiently protects condominium owners. Condo owners often endure abrupt changes in leadership, untimely decision-making processes, and sudden extraordinary expenses. This piece of legislation aims to codify the rights of condo owners and consequently protect their financial investments by ensuring stability of the boards.

- [S4718](#) seeks to stop the practice of having people paroled to a unit inside a correctional facility, which would compel the State to provide the housing and social services necessary for formerly incarcerated individuals to re-integrate into society.
- [S3017](#) creates a residential condominium owner's bill of rights that includes the right to transparency, the right to timely decisions, voting rights, the right to notice, and the right against extraordinary expenses.

### Immigrant and Economic Relief

As legislators, it is critical to ensure economic relief is accessible to all, but especially for vulnerable communities such as immigrants. Many times when natural disasters or emergencies

occur, immigrant communities lack a protocol from the State on how and when they would be eligible to receive assistance. This causes the assistance to be delayed or not arrive at all. My goal is to have a system in place that is both proactive and clear. Additionally, for this system to be successful we need to ensure that immigrants are able to trust government agencies without fear of their information being disclosed to federal immigration authorities.

Expanding access to financial services is integral to achieving economic development for the immigrant community. According to a 2021 report from the New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, approximately 301,700 New York households are unbanked, meaning that they do not have either a savings or checking account. The Check Cashing Industry services hundreds of thousands of under-banked people who otherwise are unable to access traditional banking. Often, these are Black and Latino households in neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty.

- [S8293](#), or “The Community Disaster Relief and Recovery Act of 2022”, would create an emergency assistance program for undocumented individuals impacted by natural disasters. Hurricane Ida unveiled the mass injustice of thousands of non-citizen residents who were unable to access federal disaster relief programs.
- [S2197](#) seeks to ensure that New York State facilities and programs overseen by state agencies receive accurate and clear guidance on how to respond to requests by federal immigration authorities.
- [S2796](#), or “The Cashitos Act”, seeks to modernize existing statute to reflect the full scope of financial services available at check cashing establishments for the benefit of the economic development of our communities.

It is my privilege and honor to fight for a humane path that addresses the needs of the most disadvantaged communities within our state. I will be prioritizing this legislative agenda in my role as New York State Senator of the 32nd Senatorial District.

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