



NEW YORK STATE SENATE DEMOCRATIC MAJORITY

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Contact: Jonathan Heppner | heppner@nysenate.gov | 518-455-2415

Senate Majority to Pass Legislation to Strengthen Fire Safety and Prevention Measures

In response to the Bronx Apartment Fire in January

(Albany, NY) The Senate Democratic Majority today will pass legislation to improve the guidelines, oversight, and enforcement necessary for preventing house fires. The proposed bills would update the fire prevention and building code more frequently; expand remedies for code violations; address investigations into the administration and enforcement of these codes; establish new emergency contact requirements for managers of multi-family buildings; increase testing of fire hydrants; institute new requirements for the inspection of non-fireproof buildings; strengthen space-heater safety regulations, and establish an Ombudsperson for Local Code Enforcement Programs and increase the code enforcement powers of the Secretary of State.

This package comes in the wake of several deadly blazes in New York, most notably the Bronx apartment fire on January 9 of this year. This tragedy, which claimed 17 lives, including 8 children, was caused and compounded by multiple safety regulation failures. New York surpasses the national average for fire related injuries and deaths, with 68 casualties reported already this year. These disasters often affect immigrant and low-income populations, who are less able to absorb the costs of displacement and rebuild in the aftermath of disaster. This legislation furthers the New York Senate Majority's efforts to raise the floor for our most vulnerable, and improve the quality of life for everyone in our state.

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, "There are few disasters more personal, terrifying, and life-altering than fires. New York's painful history on this issue—from the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory to the recent Bronx fire—galvanizes us to do more to help save lives. That is why we are taking action to prevent these crises from happening with effective safety regulations and meaningful enforcement. These measures will improve the safety of all New York housing and protect families. I want to thank the bill sponsors for spearheading this effort and bringing impactful solutions to this critical matter."

The legislation being passed by the Senate Majority includes:

- **Violations Of Building and Fire Code Standards:** This bill, S.8795A, sponsored by Senator Gustavo Rivera, imposes certain penalties related to violations of building and

fire code standards within fourteen days and increases certain fine amounts for violations of housing standards in New York City.

- **Fire Safety Standards for Space Heaters:** This bill, S.7863A, sponsored by Senator Cordell Cleare, requires space heaters distributed or sold in the state or to persons located in the state to have thermostats, automatic shut-offs and be certified by a testing and certification body recognized and approved by the United States Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration.
- **Fine Increase For Building Code Violations:** This bill, S.4708, sponsored by Senator Leroy Comrie, expands remedies for violations of New York State uniform fire prevention and building code and addresses penalties for willful or repeated code violations.
- **Update to State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code:** This bill, S.6210A, sponsored by Senator James Skoufis, directs the state fire prevention and building code council to update the state fire prevention and building code and the state energy conservation construction code within 12 months of the publication of any updated or revised edition of the international and national codes relating thereto, so as to ensure that the state's codes reflect such revisions and updates.
- **Investigations into Fire Prevention and Building Code Administration:** This bill, S.1830, sponsored by Senator James Skoufis, relates to conducting investigations into the administration and enforcement of the New York State uniform fire prevention and building code and the New York state energy conservation construction code.
- **Safety For Multi-Residential Homes:** This bill, S.240B, sponsored by Senator Shelley Mayer, requires owners and agents of multiple residences and multiple dwellings to provide names and contact information of residents to emergency personnel in an emergency situation, so as to ensure that residents are safely evacuated and accounted for.
- **Fire Hydrant Systems Test:** This bill, S.5093A, sponsored by Senator Tim Kennedy, increases testing of fire hydrant systems in accordance with the standards established by the National Fire Protection Association.
- **Non-Fireproof Inspections:** This bill, S.6089A, sponsored by Senator Robert Jackson, requires the inspection of non-fireproof buildings and compliance with the New York property maintenance code.
- **Fire Protection System Installation Licensor:** This bill, S.6761A, sponsored by Senator Diane Savino, creates a licensing and regulation structure for fire suppression systems which requires professions who perform work on fire suppression systems be licensed.
- **Increasing State Code Enforcement Powers:** This bill S.3606, sponsored by Senator Jamaal Bailey, establishes an Ombudsperson for Local Code Enforcement Programs and Increases the Code Enforcement Powers of the Secretary of the State.

Bill sponsor Senator Jamaal Bailey said, “The recent tragic fires in Bronx communities have highlighted the urgent need for stronger fire safety and code enforcement standards. The legislation that my colleagues and I are passing will strengthen protections against preventable fires and help New York develop a more prepared, responsive, and diligent approach to fire safety and prevention. My bill, S3606, will increase the number of code enforcement personnel serving local communities and establish a dedicated role in local code enforcement programs to

monitor compliance with minimum standards. The legislation will also create the Office of the State Code Enforcement Ombudsperson to resolve issues in local code enforcement programs. We cannot wait until the next tragedy strikes – the steps we’re taking today will help keep our first responders and residents safe and prevent future tragedies.”

Bill sponsor Senator Cordell Cleare said, "My heart breaks for all of our neighbors we have lost to sweeping fires; today, we honor their lives by turning grief into action and lasting change. Use of space heaters to fight the winter chill is common, but today we take the necessary steps to ensure that the risks associated with these devices become incredibly uncommon. By setting high, rational and universal safety standards for space heaters, we will ensure that lives are protected in the warmth of home.”

Bill sponsor Senator Leroy Comrie said, “Increasing the minimum fines for building code violations that pose immediate threats to safety of occupants and emergency responders underscores the importance of fire safety for all New Yorkers. This measure will help focus building managers' minds on both preventing and swiftly resolving these kinds of dangerous violations. The object isn’t to collect fines, it is to preserve the safety of New Yorkers and stop the life threatening situations that tragically injure and kill from emerging at all.”

Bill sponsor Senator Robert Jackson said, “Nothing should be more important than the safety of families in New York. We have witnessed the loss of life due to tragic fires resulting from landlords and property managers not living up to their responsibilities to ensure the safety of working-class families. These fires were not only tragedies but also a clear sign of housing injustice. It would seem evident that apartment buildings in working-class communities are often more vulnerable to fires. Today, I am proud to have sponsored a bill in this fire safety package requiring landlords and property managers to ensure their properties comply with safety and fire codes.”

Bill sponsor Senator Tim Kennedy said, “By passing this package of fire safety reforms, the Democratic Conference is prioritizing the well being of New Yorkers once again, and ensuring that both preventative and protective measures are upheld during emergency situations. I'm proud to sponsor one of these policies, which would require consistent testing of fire hydrants, so that first responders are - without a doubt - fully supported throughout a crisis. I thank Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins for advancing these critical bills, and for her continued commitment to improving public safety.”

Bill sponsor Senator Shelley Mayer said, “In an emergency situation, every second counts. When a fire or natural disaster strikes an apartment building, first responders can do their jobs more effectively when they are able to determine all residents have been evacuated. My bill, S.240B, which was a response to a fire in my district, ensures emergency personnel has access to residents' names and contact information so they can confirm residents have safely exited the building.”

Bill sponsor Senator Gustavo Rivera said, “It has been over thirty years since the penalties for housing standards were established in New York City, and since that time our community has experienced immense tragedy due to negligence and lack of adherence to these policies. While

we can never remove the pain and suffering for the families of the 17 lives claimed in the Twin Parks fire in my district in The Bronx, we can do everything possible to prevent this tragedy from happening again. Today, my bill S.8795A, will increase the antiquated penalties and provide incentive for adherence to housing code standards. Our families deserve to live in safe and stable housing.”

Bill sponsor Senator Diane Savino said, “This bill will protect, promote and preserve public health, safety and welfare by providing for the establishment of minimum standards for the licensure of water-based fire protection system installation. Fire protection systems are critical life and property safety systems. The layout, installation, service, repair, inspection, testing, and maintenance of which require specialized knowledge and experience.”

Bill sponsor Senator James Skoufis said, “I applaud my Senate colleagues for taking up this slate of important measures to keep our communities safe. When code enforcement is done well, tenants enjoy safe and stable housing, bad acting property owners are held accountable, first responders have confidence in their own personal safety when responding to emergencies, and residents can take pride in their communities. These improvements to statewide fire prevention and building code enforcement continue to build on our 2019 Senate investigation into the issue and will be hugely impactful for New Yorkers.”

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