

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



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Senator Helming Introduces Legislation to Help Communities Protect Against Flooding and Other Natural Hazards

Senator Helming has introduced a bipartisan bill (S.8853) to establish the Resilient New York Revolving Loan Program to help communities protect against flooding and other risks of natural hazards.

These low to no-interest loans are available as a result of the federal Safeguarding Tomorrow Through Ongoing Risk Management (STORM) Act of 2021. The STORM Act authorizes FEMA to provide grant money to states in an effort to reduce risks of disasters and natural hazards. An estimated \$500 million in federal funds has been appropriated to New York State for the program.

The proposed legislation directs the New York State Office of Emergency Management to establish an application process for the loans and launch the program in 2023.

Because FEMA grants typically require a local funding match, Senator Helming said the Resilient New York Revolving Loan Program is especially important to rural communities that have small budgets but significant infrastructure needs. This issue is critical for much of Senator Helming's district, including communities along the Lake Ontario shoreline and throughout the Finger Lakes region.

Senator Helming said, "We've seen considerable damage in my district due to flooding over the last several years, and just as recently as the heavy rains in January. This is an issue that continues to challenge many of our small and rural communities that have critical infrastructure needs and limited budgets. This legislation opens up additional funding opportunities to municipalities to help facilitate future preparedness and protect local taxpayers."

As the ranking member of the Senate Insurance Committee, Senator Helming works closely with Senator Breslin, chair of the committee. The two legislators represent New York State on the National Council of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL). Through their NCOIL work, Senator Helming and Senator Breslin worked together on model legislation to access this vital funding.

Senator Breslin said, "This critically important legislation will provide a mechanism for New York State to receive federal funding for flood resiliency projects. As we have seen in recent years, natural hazard risks have been increasing in both severity and frequency. Mitigating these risks is necessary to preserve both property values and property tax revenues. Enacting the Resilient New York Revolving Loan Program will not only allow for financing of flood mitigation projects, but also create good jobs in all the professional trades and design professions."

The bill would also make businesses, non-profit organizations, and property owners eligible for the program. Final details would be determined upon implementation.

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