



Dear Neighbor:

With spring well on its way, I hope that you and your loved ones are taking the opportunity to enjoy nature and spend time outdoors.

As your Assembly representative, I remain committed to supporting efforts that help Mohawk Valley families and residents as we collectively work to rebuild after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since the 2021 Legislative Session began, I've been working hard to advance critical legislation and support our communities. In this newsletter, you will find some first quarter highlights related to the New York State Budget, the Legislative Session, and community events.

To our doctors, nurses, teachers, first responders, paramedics, social workers, essential workers, and all New Yorkers: thank you for your commitment to our communities.

For anyone in need of assistance, please reach out to my office by calling (315) 732-1055 or emailing ButtenschonM@nyassembly.gov.

Sincerely,

Marianne Buttenschon

2021-2022 State Budget

I fought to ensure the state's spending plan invests in the Mohawk Valley's future and supports our economic recovery. The budget:

Education

This past year forced our students and teachers to make unimaginable sacrifices and quickly adjust to a brand-new style of learning and communicating unlike anything many of them have experienced before. It's been my top priority to help our students safely return to in-person learning and provide our schools with the resources they need. From fully phasing in Foundation Aid to funding Pre-K programs that propel our kids toward a bright future, I fought to ensure the state budget invests in our education system and gives our students and teachers the support they need and deserve.

The final budget provides schools in the 119th Assembly district with **\$35.1 million** more in state funding for the 2021-22 school year over last year, including an increase of **\$17 million** for Foundation Aid for a total of **\$314.7 million** in funding for school districts in the 119th. These values represent an increase of 11.16% in state funding for schools in the Mohawk Valley, and an increase of 7.82% in Foundation Aid. These figures do **not** include the federal funding provided through federal COVID-19 relief packages including the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) and the American Rescue Plan meaning school districts are set to receive even more funding. You can access the 2021-22 School Aid Runs by clicking [here](https://nyassembly.gov/2021budget/2021files/enacted/2021final_school_aid.pdf). (Link: https://nyassembly.gov/2021budget/2021files/enacted/2021final_school_aid.pdf)

Importantly, the budget also commits to fully funding Foundation Aid over the next three years, which will be critical in helping our schools lower class sizes, manage COVID-related safety issues, offer mental health resources and provide enrichment programs for students.

Additionally, the final budget:

- Makes transportation costs related to delivering food, educational materials and internet connectivity as well as district transportation standby costs reimbursable during the COVID-19 pandemic through May 7, 2020;
- Restores funding to many critical programs for teachers and educators;

- Provides **\$15 million** for a new digital inclusion program to address the statewide digital equity gap;
- **\$105 million** for Universal Prekindergarten statewide;
- Increases funding by \$2 million for 4201 schools, which serve blind and deaf students, as well as restores funding for numerous other student programs;
- Adds \$250,000 for dyslexia screenings; and
- Includes a \$500,000 increase for Independent Living Centers.

Infrastructure & Transportation

To repair and replace aging infrastructure, the 2021-22 budget includes:

- **\$538.1 million** in funding for the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPs), an increase of \$100 million;
- **\$150 million** for PAVE-NY, a \$50 million increase; and
- **\$100 million** for a new capital program to reimburse cities, towns and villages for the cost of capital projects on local roads and bridges which are signed as NY or US touring routes, but where the municipality has capital maintenance responsibility.

Further, it restores **\$100 million** in funding for the Extreme Winter Recovery program, which helps communities rebuild after harsh winters and severe weather events by covering the costs of storm-related damages, and includes **\$235 million** for Upstate Transit Systems.

Small Business, Arts & Entertainment Recovery

Small Business

The budget includes **\$800 million** in funding for a Small Business Recovery Grant Program to help small businesses across the state that have struggled to keep their doors open over the last year. It also includes:

- **\$25 million** for the NY Restaurant Resiliency Grant program;
- **\$50 million** for the COVID-19 Recovery Workforce Initiative; and
- Extensions of the **Farm Workforce Retention Tax Credit** and the **Hire-a-Vet Tax Credit**.

COVID-19 Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant Program

Businesses that did not qualify for assistance under federal COVID-19 programs or who did not receive sufficient assistance will soon be eligible to take part in the COVID-19 Pandemic Small Business Recovery Grant Program.

Eligibility requirements for the state grant program are as follows:

- Grantees must be a currently viable small business (less than 100 employees) or for-profit arts and cultural organization that has been in operation since before March 1, 2019.
- Grantees must demonstrate lost revenue or other economic hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic or compliance with COVID-19 health and safety protocols.
- Grantees must be in substantial compliance with applicable federal, state and local laws.
- Grantees must not owe any federal, state or local taxes prior to July 15, 2020, or have an approved repayment plan or agreement with the appropriate taxing authority.

The grants can cover several eligible costs incurred between March 1, 2020 and April 1, 2021, including: payroll, rent or mortgage, repayment of local property or school taxes, insurance, utility, personal protection equipment, ventilation or supplies and materials necessary to comply with COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

Arts and Entertainment

The Musical and Theatrical Production Tax Credit has been extended and increased for productions held in regions outside of New York City. This will benefit our local economy by ensuring Broadway productions have an incentive to continue bringing their shows Upstate, including to the historic Stanley Theatre in Utica and the Capitol Theatre in Rome. The budget also includes:

- **\$43.1 million** in total support for the New York State Council of the Arts (NYSCA) operating budget;
- **\$1 million** for arts stabilization grants to aid in the recovery of this industry;
- **\$40 million** for a new Arts Recovery Grant program; and
- **\$20 million** for the Arts and Cultural Facilities Improvement Program.

Landlord/Tenant/Homeowner Relief

Particularly important to Assemblywoman Buttenschon was the allocation of nearly \$3 billion in combined federal and state dollars that will be used for rent and homeowner relief, including:

- **\$100 million** for a hardship fund for those who cannot access funds from the Emergency Rental Assistance Program;
- **\$100 million** to reduce homelessness; and
- **\$575 million** in federal homeowner relief, including a three year, **\$60 million** commitment to fund the Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP) to provide legal assistance to homeowners.

Recently Passed Legislation

Nursing Homes

Throughout the pandemic, our nursing home residents have been isolated from their loved ones, which can take a devastating toll on their mental and physical health. To reestablish these essential connections, I helped pass a law that requires the state Department of Health (DOH) to develop regulations to allow family members and legal guardians of residential care facility residents to provide compassionate caregiving visitation (**Ch. 89 of 2021**). This law ensures strict health and safety protocols are in place to protect patients, staff and visitors.

To help reform nursing home care statewide, I also helped pass legislation that would:

- create a task force to study the state of long-term care services in New York (**A.3922**)
- require adult care facilities to include performance standards for infection control in their quality assurance plans (**A.5846**)
- require these facilities to provide residents and families with information on complaints, citations, inspections, enforcement actions and penalties relating to the facility (**A.5848**)
- establish a state commission to thoroughly and independently study and investigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic response on deaths in nursing homes (**A.3162**)
- create health emergency response data (**A.244**), repeal the emergency or disaster treatment protection act (**A.3397**) and provide information on where a list of violations and other actions taken against the facility can be found (**A.5848**).

Extended Public Employee Death Benefits

During the pandemic, our society has been kept largely afloat by the courage of public employees who have continued to go in to work to ensure we can still access vital goods and services. Tragically, many of these workers have fallen victim to the virus, leaving their families not only grieving, but without a source of income. Last year, my colleagues and I passed a law to ensure that the beneficiaries of public workers who died of COVID-19 after reporting to work on or after March 1, 2020, would receive a death benefit equal to 50% of the employee's monthly salary (**Ch. 89 of 2020**). This month, we passed a bill to extend the eligibility period for this death benefit to December 31, 2022, ensuring that families don't have to deal with the additional burden of lost income (**A.3988**).

Liquor Authority Transparency

Business owners shouldn't be left in the dark about how long the State Liquor Authority will take to process their license or permit applications. They've already waited up to six months with little to no updates on their application. Without knowing how long it will take for these requests to be processed by the state, businesses simply cannot plan for the future. I worked to pass legislation that will help improve the transparency of the State Liquor Authority's (SLA) license and permit application process (**A.597**). I also co-sponsored legislation that will provide alternative penalties for first-time violations of an SLA rule or regulation (**A.5972**). This law gives business owners who received their first violation during the pandemic flexibility with the repercussions, especially if the actions or omissions are determined by the authority to be minimal under this past year's circumstances.

Supporting Flood Mitigation Efforts

The Mohawk Valley is no stranger to flooding, as the devastating 2019 Halloween floods made abundantly clear for us all. To help support local flood mitigation efforts, I'm sponsoring legislation that would allow municipalities with high-hazard dams to request a water level monitoring system (**A.6201**).

Specifically, the bill would require the New York Canal Corporation to install a water level monitoring system at class C, or high-hazard, dams at the request of municipalities where the dam is located or those immediately downstream from it. According to the state Department of

Environmental Conservation (DEC), failure of a Class C classified dam could result in widespread or serious damage to homes, businesses, infrastructure and utilities, as well as potential loss of life.[1] (Link: dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/togs315.pdf) The monitoring system would provide real-time information about water levels and flood risks and be available to local emergency management authorities.

Standing Up For Our Veterans

The brave men and women who put their lives on the line to protect the freedoms we hold dear can face unique challenges when they return home, and it's critical that we provide support and resources. Last month, I co-sponsored and helped pass a bill to expand the number of veteran's treatment courts in New York (**A.5719-A**). The bill also authorizes transferring a criminal case against a veteran in a county without a veteran's treatment court to an adjoining county that does.

New York State has led the charge on this important issue, as the nation's first veteran's treatment court was established in Buffalo in 2008 and there are now 35 of these specialized courts statewide. Similar to drug treatment and mental health courts, veteran's treatment courts provide veterans facing criminal prosecution who suffer from substance use disorders or mental illness with access to community-based services and veterans' agencies and connect them with peer mentors.

In the Community:

Virtual Budget Town Hall

I held two virtual town hall meetings to listen to constituent concerns and discuss ongoing budget issues. such as funding for agriculture initiatives and schools and the appointing of essential caregivers for nursing home residents. Many of the biggest concerns expressed during the meeting were related to the governor's policy for nursing home residents during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the subsequent undercounting of the number of nursing home deaths.

Students with Disabilities Day

Every student deserves a high-quality education that prepares them for a successful future outside the classroom. I was proud to support The New York State Legislature in proclaiming February 25 as Students with Disabilities Day in the state of New York Students **(K66)**. Continued awareness regarding barriers and vital support services for students with disabilities is something I'll continue fighting for.

Valentines for Vets

Over 200 students designed cards for veterans in nursing homes this year. Click [here](#) to check out their talented work:



Halfway Through Winter Campaign

Need a little inspiration? Tune in to listen as our local community leaders share their wisdom and guidance in our Halfway Through Winter campaign

<https://nyassembly.gov/mem/Marianne-Buttenschon/story/95427>



Women's History Month

Mohawk Valley student's celebrated Women's History Month by defining women who've inspired them. Check out their talented work: <https://animoto.com/play/1PbosmSlii3z1Sidq71R6w>

Don't Get Ticked NY!

As the weather gets warmer and more of us venture outside to enjoy our region's natural beauty, it's important everyone knows about the risks of ticks and tick-borne diseases. Recently, I partnered with Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, New York State Integrated Pest Management, and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County for a tick information session that you can watch here:

<https://nyassembly.gov/mem/Marianne-Buttenschon/story/96617>

The virtual tick prevention forum was done in response to the increased risk posed by Lyme disease and other tick-borne diseases around the country. I helped secure funding in the 2021-22 state budget to fund the Tick Disease Prevention program so we can continue to raise awareness of these diseases and so families may more easily identify ticks and implement tick prevention measures, such as wearing light-colored clothing when hiking and thoroughly checking one's skin afterwards.



Please visit these New York State Integrated Pest Management pages to learn more about ticks and how to protect yourself from them:

- What Do Ticks Look Like? (<https://nysipm.cornell.edu/whats-bugging-you/ticks/what-do-ticks-look>)
- Why Should I Worry About Ticks? (<https://nysipm.cornell.edu/whats-bugging-you/ticks/why-should-i-worry-about-ticks>)
- Why Do I Have Ticks in My Yard? (<https://nysipm.cornell.edu/whats-bugging-you/ticks/why-do-i-have-ticks>)
- How Do I Manage Ticks in the Landscape? (<https://nysipm.cornell.edu/whats-bugging-you/ticks/how-do-i-manage-ticks-landscape>)
- How Do I Protect Myself From Ticks? (<https://nysipm.cornell.edu/whats-bugging-you/ticks/how-do-i-protect-myself-ticks>)
- FAQs: Frequently Asked Questions About Ticks (<https://nysipm.cornell.edu/whats-bugging-you/ticks/tick-faqs>)

April 2021 Newsletter

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to my office at 315-732-1055 or ButtenshonM@nyassembly.gov.

Sincerely,

Marianne Buttenshon

Member of Assembly

119th Assembly District

Utica | Rome | Floyd | Frankfort | Marcy | Whitestown

Frankfort | New York Mills | Oriskany | Whitesboro | Yorkville