



Dear Community,

There has been a great deal of activity in Albany in recent weeks, from budget negotiations that are still ongoing to a steady flow of legislation, hearings, and press events. With so much happening at once, it can be challenging to capture everything in real time. I want to take a moment to share an update on key developments and highlight several bills that have advanced or that I hope to help advance this session.

Legislative Update

Food Safety & Chemical Disclosure Act Passes Legislature



After years of advocacy and growing public concern about the safety of chemical additives in our food, [the Legislature has passed the Food Safety & Chemical Disclosure Act \(A1556\)](#), the bill I sponsored to strengthen oversight and increase transparency for consumers.

For decades, a federal loophole has allowed companies to designate certain substances as “generally recognized as safe” (GRAS) without notifying regulators or making the underlying safety information publicly available. This legislation addresses that gap by requiring disclosure and increasing transparency and accountability in the food system.

This bill will:

- Require food companies to report ingredients they have classified as GRAS directly to New York regulators
- Require the safety information supporting those determinations to be publicly available
- Close the “secret GRAS” loophole that has allowed chemicals to enter the food supply without public transparency
- Prohibit the use of three additives, Red Dye 3, potassium bromate, and propylparaben, which have been linked to cancer concerns, hormone disruption, and other health risks

This legislation reflects years of work alongside advocates, scientists, and community members who have pushed for stronger consumer protections and greater transparency in our food system.

The bill has passed both houses of the Legislature and now awaits action by the Governor.

[Here is a clip from my debate on the floor.](#)

Strengthening Accountability for State Workers



This week, the Assembly passed my legislation ([A2589](#)) to allow New York State to be held to the same federal workplace standards that already apply to private employers and local governments.

Under the 11th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, states generally cannot be sued in federal court without their consent, a legal principle known as sovereign immunity. This legislation provides a limited waiver of New York's sovereign immunity for a specific set of longstanding federal workplace laws:

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA)
- The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)
- The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Importantly, this bill does not create entirely new worker protections or new categories of damages that workers can seek. New York already has strong state labor and civil rights laws covering disability discrimination, age discrimination, wages and overtime, and family and medical leave.

What this legislation does is allow state employees, in limited circumstances, to pursue claims under federal workplace laws and access the federal court system when federal law may provide different or expanded procedural pathways, enforcement mechanisms, or remedies beyond those available under state law alone. While these situations may be relatively uncommon, this legislation expands overall protections for state employees and helps ensure access to the full protections intended under both state and federal law.

[You can watch my remarks here.](#)

Addressing Microplastic Pollution from Washing Machines



Last week, we passed legislation ([A4716/S5606](#)) I championed in the Assembly this year to reduce microplastic pollution from washing machines, one of the largest sources of microplastics entering our waterways and, ultimately, our food system and bodies.

Research has shown that microscopic plastic fibers shed from synthetic clothing during washing are a major source of microplastic pollution. Synthetic textiles such as polyester, nylon, acrylic, and fleece release tiny plastic fibers during laundry cycles, many of which are too small to be fully captured by existing wastewater treatment systems. Some pass into rivers, lakes, and oceans, while others accumulate in sewage sludge and biosolids that can later be applied to land.

These particles are now found throughout the environment, including in oceans, freshwater systems, soils, wildlife, agricultural lands, and even remote ecosystems. In fact, microplastic pollution is now so widespread that it has been detected extensively in cloud water, rainfall, remote mountain regions, and even freshly fallen snow in Antarctica. Because most plastics degrade extremely slowly, microplastics can persist in the environment for decades or centuries depending on the material and conditions.

Microplastics have also been detected in human blood, lungs, placenta, breastmilk, and other tissues. Scientists are increasingly studying potential links between long-term microplastic exposure and inflammation, oxidative stress, endocrine disruption, respiratory impacts, reproductive and developmental effects, and other chronic health concerns. While research on specific human health outcomes is still evolving, there is broad scientific consensus that microplastic pollution is widespread, persistent, and biologically active.

What this legislation does

- Requires new washing machines sold in New York beginning January 1, 2030 to include microfiber filtration systems designed to capture synthetic plastic fibers before they enter wastewater systems
- Establishes a multi-year implementation timeline to allow manufacturers time to incorporate effective filtration technologies into appliance design
- Requires consumer labeling and maintenance information so filters are properly used and maintained
- Helps reduce microplastic pollution at the source, before it disperses into waterways, soils, food webs, and the broader environment

Why this matters

- Wastewater treatment systems do not fully eliminate these particles, allowing pollution to persist and spread through water and land systems
- Microplastics have been detected in human tissues and ecosystems across the globe

- Capturing pollution at the point of release is significantly more effective and cost-efficient than attempting to remove it after widespread environmental contamination has occurred

[You can watch my explanation of the bill here.](#)

Housing Justice 4 All Presser



Housing affordability continues to be one of the most significant challenges facing communities across New York. While increasing housing supply remains essential, many municipalities are also looking for additional tools to help address rapid rent increases, housing instability, and rising rates of displacement and homelessness affecting working individuals, families with children, seniors, and people living on fixed incomes.

The Rent Emergency Stabilization for Tenants (REST) Act ([A4877A/S4659A](#)) would modernize the process by which local governments may choose to adopt rent stabilization protections under state law, giving local governments greater flexibility to respond to severe housing affordability pressures within their own communities without creating a statewide rent stabilization mandate.

Under current law, municipalities outside of New York City face significant barriers to adopting rent stabilization because eligibility is tied almost entirely to a vacancy rate study that must be conducted by the municipality and show a rental vacancy rate below 5%. These studies are often expensive, highly technical, and have led to repeated litigation against municipalities attempting to use the law. In practice, many communities experiencing serious housing instability, rising rents, displacement, and homelessness may still struggle to qualify under this narrow framework.

The REST Act expands the criteria local governments can use to determine whether a housing emergency exists. In addition to vacancy rates, municipalities can use percent of families that experience rent burden, housing supply constraints, and homelessness. It's important that communities where housing may technically exist but remains financially inaccessible to many working households have tools to expand access.

The legislation also modernizes eligibility rules to better reflect housing stock outside New York City. Current law was largely designed around New York City's housing market in the 1970s and often excludes smaller multifamily buildings that are more common in upstate communities. The REST Act would allow municipalities to determine whether smaller buildings should be included and would replace the fixed 1974 construction cutoff with a rolling 15-year exemption for newer buildings.

The broader purpose of the legislation is community stability. Increasingly, housing insecurity is affecting not only unemployed individuals, but also fully employed adults and families with children who are working and still unable to keep pace with rapidly rising housing costs. Frequent displacement can disrupt children's education, strain local services, destabilize workforces, increase shelter demand, and weaken long-term community cohesion.

PSYPACT Press Conference



Earlier this week, I spoke at a press conference in honor of Jack Schreiber, a young man with ADHD who lost access to his therapist when he went away to college out of state because current law did not allow that therapeutic relationship to continue across state lines. His death by suicide was a devastating and unnecessary loss.

The event and day-long advocacy effort [brought together Jack's family](#), mental health professionals, mental health associations, legislators, and A.J. Brown, a professional football player who has spoken publicly about his own mental health struggles and now uses his platform to encourage young people and adults to seek help.

New York is facing a mental health crisis, especially among young people, with data showing deeply concerning levels of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and death by suicide. Despite this growing crisis, too many are struggling to find consistent, specialized mental health care.

The Psychology Interjurisdictional Compact, known as PSYPACT ([A6744/S7136](#)), would allow New York to join a national interstate compact of more than 40 participating states and jurisdictions that expands access to licensed psychologists across state lines.

Joining this compact would allow qualified licensed psychologists in New York to provide telepsychology across state lines after receiving specific authorization. Participating states also share licensure and disciplinary information to help maintain accountability and patient protections.

PSYPACT is not about lowering standards. It is about [removing an unnecessary barrier](#) to care while preserving licensing, accountability, and patient protection. For students, families, rural communities, people with specialized needs, and anyone whose trusted therapist happens to be across a state line, this bill can help protect continuity of care when it matters most.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the high rates of ADHD in the United States, with an estimated 7 million children up to age 17 and 15.5 million adults having been diagnosed. ADHD is often characterized by creativity, intensity, insight, sensitivity, and strong problem-solving abilities. It can also be deeply isolating. People with ADHD often spend significant energy masking, suppressing natural impulses, hiding distraction or overwhelm, trying not to interrupt, investing extraordinary focus to appear calm, organized, or “normal,” and working constantly to avoid ridicule, bullying, disappointment, or exclusion. That effort can be profoundly draining as it was for Jack.

At this week's press event, [I spoke openly about my own ADHD](#). I tell people it is my superpower, one that is at the root of my empathy, comprehensive systems thinking, fast-paced mind, and ability to respond quickly in high-pressure environments. It is also profoundly exhausting to manage at times, from constantly losing anything and everything, to forgetting names, to struggling to

maintain one continuous train of thought without being pulled away by the other 14 thought streams occurring simultaneously. It can be isolating in social settings and draining to constantly mask a hyperactive mind. Therapy has been critically important in my own journey toward self-care and self-love, and it is a resource I will continue fighting for everyone to have access to.

In good health,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna R. Kelles". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anna Kelles, Ph.D.

Assemblymember, 125th A.D.

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