A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY

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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated the inequities that have long plagued New York City. When we break down the data demographically, we see that while all New Yorkers have been impacted in some way, those coming from traditionally marginalized communities have been hit the hardest. New Yorkers who are lower-income, immigrants, and from communities of more color have contracted the virus at higher rates and have been more likely to die as a result.\(^1\) They have also been more likely to be a frontline worker and more likely have lost their job as a result of the pandemic.\(^2\)

The citywide and national racial reckoning initiated by the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless other Black victims of police violence has shone a light on the deep-rooted causes of these disparate health and economic outcomes. Across so many sectors of urban life, our government has historically failed to meet the community needs of Black and Brown New Yorkers—and despite the best efforts of many, it continues to do so to this day. Our City is beyond overdue for a collective turning of the page. With a comprehensive economic recovery ahead of us and a new slate of state and local leadership on the horizon, we have a real opportunity to do so.

The task that is in front of us demands systemic solutions that match the severity and scope of the challenges we face. Now is not the time to turn to austerity politics that will further deprive vulnerable New Yorkers of critical resources. Historical precedent shows us that the path forward out of economic depression is the expansion of jobs and the social safety net. And we have seen through the implementation of $15 minimum wage, paid sick leave, and Pre-K for All that New York City can turn bold ideas into tangible realities for its residents. We can and we must build upon this legacy and transform our city into the progressive beacon that it has the potential to be.

In this aim, I present *A New Deal for New York City*, an agenda for a more just and livable city. It is divided into five sections that correspond with the issue areas of the Office’s Deputy Public Advocates: Housing Equity; Infrastructure & Environmental Justice; Education & Opportunity; Civic & Community Empowerment; and Justice, Health Equity, and Safety. Throughout, it makes recommendations around key legislative pieces, budgetary expenditures, and public initiatives that stem from the work of movement organizers, issue experts, and directly affected people.

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\(^1\) [www.nytimes.com/2020/05/18/nyregion/coronavirus-deaths-nyc.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/18/nyregion/coronavirus-deaths-nyc.html)

I encourage the people of the five boroughs and my colleagues in government to review these proposals and join in fighting for a New York that is for the many, not the few.

Sincerely,

Jumaane D. Williams
Public Advocate for the City of New York
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: EDUCATION & OPPORTUNITY
The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be an economic crisis in addition to a health one. Unemployment has skyrocketed, local businesses are struggling, and inequality has continued to worsen. In order to recover, the City and State need to implement a comprehensive economic plan that prioritizes the following tenets:

1. Build worker power by codifying new employee rights like paid time off and strengthening the implementation of existing ones like wage theft remediation;
2. Create an extensive workforce development plan that creates jobs and ensures they are accessible to traditionally marginalized New Yorkers;
3. Provide small businesses and not-for-profits the targeted support they need to sustain themselves post-pandemic and encourage the development of small non-traditional companies like worker-owned cooperatives and street vendors;
4. Reject austerity measures and instead raise revenue by implementing policies that ensure the ultra-wealthy pay their fair share; and
5. Rein in rampant corporate expansion and significantly reduce the impact that corporations have on policy making at the expense of resident input.
1. Build Worker Power

A 2019 City study estimates that 900,000 New Yorkers do not have a single day of paid personal time. It is time for New York to provide this basic right that is afforded to workers in advanced economies across the world. Given the myriad of ways that COVID-19 has impacted our lives, prioritizing mental health and time with family is more important than ever. The City Council should pass our Office’s bill, Intro. 800, which would:

- Require private employers with five or more employees to offer 80 hours of paid vacation time per year;
- Require employers to provide written notice of employees’ rights as well as their accrual and usage of paid personal time;
- Protect employees from being retaliated against for exercising their right to paid time off;
- Create a minimum requirement, allowing employers to have an option to provide a more generous paid time off policy than the bill requires; and
- Establish a civil penalty of up to $15,000 when a pattern of violations is found.

Our Office will be working alongside the City’s small business community to ensure that the implementation of this legislation will be supplemented with significant assistance related to COVID-19, including measures recommended in this section of the report.

Another labor right that needs to be addressed is unemployment assistance. On the federal level, the Pandemic Unemployment Compensation program, which expired in July, 2020 and provided $600 in additional weekly support to those receiving unemployment, should be reinstated. On the State level, the pandemic has shone a light on our antiquated and understaffed system for processing claims, which has left thousands of New Yorkers unable to access needed funds that they are entitled to. The New York State Department of Labor must develop more streamlined mechanisms for filing claims in-person, on the phone, and online; increase its full-time staff dedicated to processing these claims; and drastically reduce the average duration between making a claim and receiving assistance.

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The State Department of Labor must also address its capacity in identifying and remediating wage theft. A 2019 report from Make the Road New York and the Center for Popular Democracy estimates that unpaid minimum wages alone add up to $965 million in wage theft each year in New York. The recovery rate for this form of wage theft is an unacceptable less than 3%. This is due in large part to massive understaffing, which has led to an average annual caseload of 142 cases per wage theft investigator. The Department must immediately hire 115 new investigators at an estimated annual cost of $9 million to investigate all wage theft claims in a timely manner and conduct proactive outreach to workers who are at disproportionate risk for wage theft, especially immigrant workers.

Further, the State must strengthen wage theft remediation by passing the EMPIRE Worker Protection Act, S12 (Hoylman), which would authorize workers to take public enforcement action against employers who violate wage laws. Additionally, legislative action must be taken to ensure that companies cannot avoid wage theft obligations by hiding their assets. The much-needed SWEAT bill, A776 (Rosenthal) / S2762 (Ramos) would address this issue by allowing affected workers to freeze the employer’s assets using a lien. Unfortunately, Governor Cuomo vetoed a previous version of the bill in January 2020 despite it passing in both legislative chambers.

Governor Cuomo has also refused to apply the state’s minimum wage laws to the over 300,000 restaurant industry workers in New York, the majority of whom are women. As a result, these workers must depend on tips from customers or owners covering tip credits to make an hourly rate that all other workers are guaranteed. This dynamic contributes to the restaurant industry having the highest rates of sexual harassment of all work sectors. The Governor must eliminate the sub-minimum wage in the restaurant industry and guarantee One Fair Wage for all New Yorkers via Executive Order. The increased health risks and rates of harassment that industry workers have experienced in the pandemic make this need even more urgent.

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6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 qns.com/2020/01/cuomo-vetoes-queens-senators-wage-theft-bill-citing-technicalities/
10 Ibid.
Additionally, New York needs to take action to ensure that union rights are strengthened and organized labor can thrive. Unfortunately, due to the nationwide attack on unions including the Janus vs. AFSCME Supreme Court decision, union membership in New York declined by 140,000 between 2018 and 2019. In order to increase job security and ensure that workers are not retaliated against by employers for organizing a union, the City Council must pass Intro. 1923 (Kallos), which would prohibit termination of employment without just cause for essential workers. In addition, the City and State should dissuade union-busting activities by committing to deny contracting opportunities to companies who are found to have wrongly interfered with the right to collectively bargain. Further, the public works programs proposed throughout this report cannot circumvent hiring unionized labor by contracting projects out to non-governmental bodies.

Additionally, the State needs to evaluate the impact of the Taylor Law’s no-strike provision on the wellbeing of public sector unions. While we should encourage harmonious labor relations, legally prohibiting key tactics can severely limit the bargaining power of workers. We must keep the safety of residents in mind and it is clear that some municipal employees can have an outsized impact. At the same time, 11 states across the country, including our neighboring Pennsylvania, grant the right to strike to public sector unions and do not experience increased levels of essential service interruptions. At minimum, after 54 years it’s worth a reassessment of this policy. Given that many City and State leaders are advancing austerity agendas that leave public sector workers particularly vulnerable, all unions should be given the tools needed to negotiate from a place of strength.

Also, the City, State, and Federal governments must prepare for the continued impact of the pandemic by passing legislation to ensure essential workers are not exploited the way they were during the virus’s first wave. This includes legislation guaranteeing hazard pay of 1.5 times one’s regular salary, ensuring employees have necessary Personal Protective Equipment, and promoting protocols that will allow as many employees to work from home as possible. In this aim, the City Council should pass this Office’s bill with Council Members Rosenthal and Kallos, Intro. 2124, which would require the City to include specifications for hazard pay in solicitations for emergency procurements made during public health emergencies.

In addition, remedial policies including retroactive hazard pay, guaranteed line-of-duty death benefits, and discounted services must be implemented to make frontline workers whole, including those who are non-citizens. On the Federal level, this must include the passage of a “Heroes’ Fund” in the next coronavirus relief package, which would be used to offer a $25,000 pay increase to all essential frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This fund would fairly compensate workers for the increased risk they have taken on while easing the fiscal burden on employers and local and state governments. This Office has introduced Res. 1443, calling for such a fund.

12 www.google.com/search?q=union+membership+new+york+decline&ei=NPTjXtzPOemYwbkJhvOXkAY&start=10&sa=N&ved=2ahUKEwjcubPonP3pAhVpTDABHYb5BWlIQ8NMDeqQIEBA-&biw=1086&bih=625
Furthermore, we must provide solutions for New York’s ever-growing number of gig workers, many of whom lack the basic benefits that are guaranteed to hourly and salaried employees. As a first step, the State must end the rampant practice of misclassifying employees as independent contractors in order to drive down wages and withhold benefits. Second, for those who truly do fit the description of an independent contractor, we must develop a portable benefits program that is tied to the individual worker rather than the employer, so that it can be taken from job to job without interruption in coverage or loss of funding. The program should be inclusive of all benefits guaranteed to employees and funded jointly by a service tax and an employer tax. Third, the City needs to fund a $0.5 million outreach campaign around the Freelance Isn’t Free Act and Local Law 172, so that all gig workers, especially day laborers and undocumented workers, are aware of and can utilize the protections that these critical laws afford: the right to a written contract, timely and full payment, protection from retaliation, and protection under Human Rights law.

Delivery workers are some of the most exploited laborers in the gig economy and their needs must be addressed. As the Worker Justice Project has raised, these workers deserve the right to access restaurant restrooms; a living wage and hazard pay; essential protections from bicycle robberies, wage theft, and health & safety standards; the right to use a physical public space to eat, rest, and be protected from extreme weather; and the right to organize. Our Office is currently working alongside colleagues in the Council and affected workers to develop legislation that will codify these priorities.

The City also needs to move to support domestic workers, who are currently exempt from various City human rights laws including the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act. These exemptions leave these workers, who are predominantly women of color, vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation. This Office has proudly co-sponsored Int. 339 (Rose), which would remove these exemptions, alongside 35 of our colleagues in the Council. Our Office supports Hand in Hand in calling for this bill to move expeditiously.

The State should end discrimination in professional licensure. If a New Yorker has proper training and qualifications, they should be allowed to work in their chosen field. As such, New York should follow the lead of New Jersey in granting undocumented residents the right to obtain professional licenses. New York should also remove restrictions around formerly incarcerated from obtaining licenses as well, with only rare exceptions being made regarding work in sensitive industries.

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13 www.youtube.com/watch?v=q3gijGWOSNY&t=151s
2. Develop New York City’s Workforce

The City needs to construct better pipelines connecting its young people to the workforce. In order to do so, the City and State need to prioritize the Department of Education (DOE), the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), and the City University of New York (CUNY) in its budgets. Specifically, critical programs that provide youth from historically marginalized communities with on-the-job experience and directly facilitate relationships with employers must be expanded—not cut—as the Governor and Mayor have both sought to do. Programs that need to be prioritized include:

- **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)**- SYEP jobs provide financial support, invaluable professional experience, and a proven mechanism in reducing involvement with the criminal justice system. Despite receiving around 135,000 applicants last year in an abbreviated application window, the Mayor’s preliminary FY2022 budget includes only 70,000 SYEP slots. This is a decrease from the 75,000 slots included in 2019’s program. As we recover from the program’s chaotic rollout and administration in 2020, we must move towards universal summer youth employment for all who want it and ensure that no SYEP applicants are denied. In this aim, the City must provide at least 100,000 SYEP slots in 2021 through a $70 million budget increase and pass Int. 1474 (Kallos).

- **Youth Employment Education Program (YEEP)**- Currently, many immigrant youth are excluded from SYEP due to a lack of work authorization. The City Council should pass this Office’s bill, Intro. 1670, which addresses this problem by creating a Youth Employment Education Program that would provide paid summer educational opportunities to all youth, regardless of citizenship status.

- **Unity Works**- In October 2019, the Mayor announced the creation of Unity Works, a workforce development and education program for LGBTQ+ youth at risk of homelessness. Given that these youth are at significantly increased risk of experiencing unemployment, workplace discrimination, and not finishing high school, this program fills a glaring need within the City’s workforce development infrastructure. However, in May 2020, the Mayor announced that despite Unity Works costing the City only $2.97 million over four years, that program would be indefinitely halted due to budget constraints created by the pandemic. The administration needs to demonstrate its commitment to the LGBTQ+ community and fully reinstate the program and its budget.

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• **Trans Equity Program Initiative (TEPI)**- In November 2018, the City Council announced the creation of TEPI, the first workforce development initiative specifically tailored to the trans community. The initiative is currently allocated $1.9 million to sustain education programs, legal guidance, employment services, and healthcare services. The City Council should increase this funding by $2.8 million in the upcoming fiscal year.

• **CUNY EDGE**- This joint program between the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and CUNY provides services that help students who are receiving public assistance achieve academic excellence, graduate on time, and find employment. The program, which currently reaches 3,000 students, should be fully funded so that it can expand its scope and services.

Additionally, large companies often aim to relocate to New York City with the intent of using the City’s undeniable cultural and lifestyle appeal to attract top-tier talent from across the country to their workforce. What gets lost in this framework is that New York City already possesses an incredible pool of talent in its schools and communities more broadly. We want to welcome companies to our City and facilitate high-quality jobs for these local New Yorkers. Large companies operating in the City must demonstrate their commitment to being positive community members by negotiating Community Workforce Agreements with local stakeholders that include components like:

- Local hiring criteria;
- Mentoring and skills-training programs; and
- Enforceable guarantees that employees—including those who work for contractors or subcontractors—have fair wages, benefits, work conditions, and the right to form a union.

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20 [www1.cuny.edu/sites/cunyedge/overview/](www1.cuny.edu/sites/cunyedge/overview/)
22 [ourhq2wishlist.org/](ourhq2wishlist.org/)
Unions provide long-lasting, well-compensated careers and play a critical role in economic mobility in New York City. Thus, it is critical that all New Yorkers, including those who are of more color, immigrants, women, LGBTQ+, and formerly incarcerated, have pathways to union membership through apprenticeships and skills-training programs. Initiatives such as the Edward J. Malloy Construction Skills Pre-Apprenticeship Program have successfully connected youth in marginalized communities to union careers and increased Black and Latinx representation in building trades unions.\textsuperscript{23}  \textsuperscript{24} Efforts such as these must be continued and strengthened across organized labor in order to ensure that progress is furthered on this front. On the governmental level, these efforts should be incentivized by requiring companies that receive City or State contracts to adopt stronger labor standards, mandatory apprenticeship requirements, and local hiring criteria.

New York City should also be a nationwide leader in providing “up-skilling” opportunities for its existing workforce. As the Center for an Urban Future found, over 456,000 New York City jobs are vulnerable to being eliminated due to developments in automation.\textsuperscript{25} In order to ensure that New Yorkers can attain skills needed to thrive in the rapidly changing economy, the City should establish Life-Long Learning Accounts. Workers could opt to place earnings in these accounts and the City and employers would match these contributions up to an established cap. Funds in these accounts would be used for the exclusive purposes of training and education and be subject to balance limits and limited investment returns to encourage their regular usage.\textsuperscript{26}

New York City must develop transformative public works programs as we emerge from the pandemic. Dramatic governmental intervention is needed in order to compensate for the more than 900,000 jobs that have been lost since February.\textsuperscript{27} Concurrently, there is a significant need for an influx of workers into the public sector. By launching projects like a Green New Deal, Renewable Rikers, and a City Health Corps, the City can simultaneously address these needs. In doing so, we can provide financial stability for New Yorkers, stimulate the economy, and implement lasting solutions to the problems that have long plagued our City. Proposals regarding these programs and others are included throughout the body of this report.

\textsuperscript{23} internal.sipa.columbia.edu/system/files/Columbia%20SIPA%20Construction%20Skills%20Report%20Final%20-%20March%202014_0.pdf
\textsuperscript{24} www.epi.org/publication/diversity-in-the-nyc-construction-union-and-nonunion-sectors/
\textsuperscript{25} nycfuture.org/research/state-of-work-automation-impact-on-new-york-state
\textsuperscript{26} www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/lifelong-learning-and-training-accounts-2018/
\textsuperscript{27} www.nytimes.com/2020/05/29/nyregion/budget-borrow-coronavirus-ny.html
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: EDUCATION & OPPORTUNITY

A public works program of this scale has historical precedent in the New Deal, which was implemented in the 1930s following the Great Depression. The leading economic research on the New Deal’s impact finds that through public works and relief spending, the New Deal created ideal public policy outcomes current efforts should seek to mimic, including increased earnings, increased consumption activity, reduced crime rates, and reduced mortality. However, these positive outcomes were significantly mitigated by the blatant exclusion of Black workers in the New Deal’s programs. Current efforts must prioritize including New Yorkers of more color in its programs, especially in programs that operate within communities of more color.

In implementing these workforce development and training programs, it is critical that we utilize the existing infrastructure of CUNY and Community-Based Organizations. Many certifications, vocational and technical training, educational credits, and professional development supports are readily scalable for quality expansion through existing programs. Particular emphasis should be placed on those led by and working with communities of more color.

3. Support Small Businesses and Community Based Organizations

The pandemic has devastated New York’s small businesses, which give our city jobs, tax revenue, and invaluable neighborhood character. In response to this devastation, the Mayor’s Administration launched and then quickly abandoned its poorly run Economic Injury Disaster Loan program, which distributed less than 1% of its mere $49 million in funds to Bronx businesses. Further, the Administration proceeded to propose a 60% cut of the NYC Department of Small Business Services’ (SBS) budget in FY 2021. The City must reverse course and provide immediate support to small businesses by passing this Office’s bill, Int. 1990, which would require the Department of Small Business Services to create an interest-free loan program for small businesses, non-profit organizations, and freelance workers forced to close or operate at reduced capacity due to the pandemic.

28 warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/research/centres/cage/manage/publications/274-2016_fishback.pdf
29 lawecommons.luc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1150&context=facpubs
30 gothamist.com/news/nycs-small-business-relief-mostly-going-manhattan-shops
31 files.constantcontact.com/1c58f85b001/e60f292e-66ef-4260-b9b4-3cb911aa866b.pdf
Additionally the City should suspend or severely cap commercial rent; offer tax breaks and deferments; and minimize cuts to SBS. In addition, it should spur job creation in the sector by redirecting the tax incentives frequently offered to wealthy corporations to small businesses. The City Council should also pass this Office’s bill Intro. 2126, which would require SBS to report on revenues lost, jobs eliminated, and businesses permanently closed due to the pandemic, disaggregated by key categories. With clear data, we can identify which neighborhoods and types of businesses were hit the hardest and develop targeted recovery policies.

Moving forward, the City must address rapidly rising commercial rents which have threatened the existence of many small businesses and created a blight of vacant retail spaces in neighborhoods across all five boroughs. The Small Business Jobs Survival Act, Int. 737 (Rodriguez), would do this by providing small business owners with the right to a 10-year lease with right to renewal and the right to third party arbitration if fair terms cannot be negotiated. Once edits are made to ensure that its implementation doesn’t inadvertently benefit chain stores at the expense of mom and pops, the Council should pass this bill, which our Office is proud to co-sponsor.

In order to support New York City’s restaurants, which have been hit so hard by the pandemic, we should clamp down on the exploitative practices of third party food delivery platforms. The City Council began to do so with its important bill, Intro. 1908 (Moya), which set a 15% cap on delivery commission fees during the duration of the pandemic. This cap should be reduced to 10% and be made permanent. Additionally, legislative action should be taken to prohibit platforms from charging fees for customer phone calls that
do not result in orders, listing restaurants without their permission, and engaging in advertising tactics deliberately designed to direct customers away from engaging with restaurants directly.

Action must also be taken to support minority, immigrant, and women-owned businesses, many of which were unable to benefit from crisis relief programs run by the city, state, and federal governments. In order to do so, the Mayor should double funding for the $3 million Restaurant Revitalization Program, which subsidizes the wages of workers in restaurants in immigrant neighborhoods. Further, as the Center for an Urban Future has argued, the City should prioritize New York City-based minority, immigrant, and women-owned businesses in its emergency contracting processes.\(^{32}\) It is also critical that the City ensures government programs can reach these businesses by partnering with trusted community-based organizations and increasing translations of critical materials. While most business development services resources are available in eight languages, access should be expanded to incorporate the multitude of languages spoken by the City’s entrepreneurs.

Critically, we must also support non-traditional small businesses including street vendors, who are mostly low-wage immigrant workers. As the Street Vendor Project has made clear, SBS programs must shift their eligibility criteria to provide street vendors with access to their services, including financial pandemic relief and business development resources. In addition, the City must incorporate street vendors in its policymaking around Open Streets planning. Our Office was proud to co-sponsor the recently passed Intro. 1116 (Chin) and look forward to its speedy implementation. This bill allows the city to issue 400 new street vending permits each year over the next decade, creates an Office of Street Vending Enforcement, and creates a Street Vendor Advisory Board with relevant stakeholders.

The City also needs to support worker co-ops, small businesses that are both owned and controlled by their workers. This innovative workplace model creates sustainable opportunities for entrepreneurship for communities that have historically lacked access to business ownership. In order to do so, the City Council should double its current $3,067,650 in funding to the Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI).\(^{33}\) In preparation for the legalization of marijuana in New York State, the Council should also create a project within the WCBDI that develops and supports worker-owned marijuana businesses, specifically those run by formerly incarcerated people and entrepreneurs of more color. This would help ensure that legalization can economically benefit the communities disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs. In this aim, New York City should also look to mimic Ordinance No. 1409, which has passed in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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\(^{32}\) nycfuture.org/events/bolstering-immigrant-and-minority-owned-small-businesses

\(^{33}\) council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2020/06/Fiscal-2021-Schedule-C-Cover-REPORT-Final.pdf
Further, the City must ensure the health of its community-based organizations, whose integral service provision role has been brought to the forefront during the pandemic. In the immediate term, the City must guarantee uninterrupted contract payments to these organizations, loosen the budget restrictions for their expenditures so that they can respond to emergency needs in real time, and provide hazard pay to frontline employees in this sector. Our Office also supports Intro. 2137 (Kallos), which would establish prevailing wage requirements for city-contracted human service workers, ensuring that these essential workers are fairly compensated. Moving forward, the City must additionally prioritize utilizing the expertise, cultural competency, and existing infrastructure that community-based organizations offer when implementing critical projects including social distancing enforcement, COVID-19 testing and tracing, and mental health crisis response.

4. Reject Austerity, Raise Revenue

The pandemic has inflated New York State’s budget deficit. But given this moment’s immense need for real investment in the people of New York and robust government services, we must reject Governor Cuomo’s proposed austerity practices that harm our most vulnerable communities, including cutting Medicaid and education funding.

In order to avoid devastating cuts to the social safety net, the City should employ long-term borrowing strategies to ensure an influx of at least $4 billion dollars into the City’s coffers. In the periods following crises such as the 9/11 attacks, the City has taken on long-term debt and been able to recover, grow, and pay down what is owed. It is extremely important the Governor and State Legislature do not interfere with the City’s ability to take this action here, as failing to secure this infusion would rob the city of vital programs and thousands of jobs.

The federal government must also intervene and provide New York City and State with the support that it needs to emerge from the crisis. This support must be reflective of the disproportionate effect that the virus had on New York as well as New York’s status as the country’s largest contributor in federal taxes. Currently New York receives only $0.90 in federal spending for every $1.00 it generates in federal taxes.

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Further, we must raise State revenue by implementing the Invest in Our New York Act that would make the wealthiest New Yorkers pay their fair share. These include:

- Instituting higher marginal tax rates on the highest earning New Yorkers. Legislation could include the Billionaire Mark to Market Tax Act, A5092 (De La Rosa) / S4482 (Ramos), which would tax the unrealized capital gains of New Yorkers making more than $1 billion in order to establish a worker bailout fund that would provide workers traditionally excluded from wage protection programs with access to unemployment benefits. It could also include the Millionaire’s Tax and Economic Equity Act, A5442 (Taylor) / S1513 (Sanders), which would increase the income tax rates for those earning more than $1 million annually and direct this funding to public education and Medicaid in equal parts. This bill would increase State revenue by an estimated $4.5 billion annually.\(^{38}\)

\(^{37}\) investinourny.org/media/pages/home/f437403786-1610116749/ionyfullreport_1.2_2021launch.pdf

• **Closing the carried interest loophole** by passing A3976 (Aubry) / S999 (Hoylman). Private equity and hedge fund managers are currently able to tax much of their income as capital gains instead of as earned wages, resulting in many of Wall Street’s highest earners paying lower tax rates than other working New Yorkers. This bill would rectify this problem and generate up to $3.5 Billion in new revenue for the state.\(^{39}\)

• Implementing a **stock transfer tax** by passing A3353 (Steck) / S1406 (Sanders). New York currently has a 0.25% stock transfer tax, but a 100% rebate renders this tax functionally nonexistent. This bill would repeal this rebate and could generate billions annually.\(^{40}\) This tax would still be lower than comparable taxes in other financial centers such as London and primarily impact high-risk speculative traders.\(^{41}\) While the tax could face significant legal challenges and attempts at circumvention, the State can no longer exempt the financial sector from paying the taxes for operating in New York that all other sectors pay. In and of itself, passing these bills is the right thing to do.

• Implementing an **heir tax** on the highest 1% of inheritances.

• **Repealing the corporate profit tax breaks** implemented by President Trump within New York State and restoring pre-2017 percentages.\(^{42}\)

Our Office also supports:

• **Eliminating rebates for taxes on stock buybacks.** These rebates are essentially taxpayer subsidies for transactions that companies use to artificially increase the price of their stock and enrich their investors instead of hiring workers, increasing pay, or funding community development. Eliminating the rebate through the passage of A2422 (Niou) / S4528 (May) would generate an estimated $3.2 billion annually.\(^{43}\)

• **Repealing tax exemptions on luxury goods** immediately by passing A555 (Carroll) / S430 (Hoylman) and A918 (Carroll) / S429 (Hoylman). In 2015 the State passed a sales tax exemption on private planes and yachts that cost over $230,000. At a time when working New Yorkers are struggling to make ends meet, taxing these opulent goods at a lower rate than basic necessities is nothing short of a moral failing.

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\(^{39}\) [www.nysenate.gov/sites/default/files/unfair_gains_-_closing_the_carried_interest_loophole_full.pdf](http://www.nysenate.gov/sites/default/files/unfair_gains_-_closing_the_carried_interest_loophole_full.pdf)


\(^{41}\) [www.gov.uk/tax-buy-shares#:~:text=When%20you%20buy%20shares%2C%20you,transaction%20is%20over%20%C2%A31%2C000](http://www.gov.uk/tax-buy-shares#:~:text=When%20you%20buy%20shares%2C%20you,transaction%20is%20over%20%C2%A31%2C000)


5. Challenge Corporate Power

The City and State need to stop engaging in the “race to the bottom” to attract companies to New York through tax breaks and corporate incentives. While New York should encourage job creation, we must make sure that it happens to the benefit of local New Yorkers, not at their expense. Decision-making around development needs to guarantee that housing displacement, worker exploitation, and avoidance of regulatory practices will not occur. Additionally, business development deals must happen transparently and abide by public mechanisms including the City’s Land Use procedures and community board approval.

New York City additionally needs to transform our economy by establishing a Public Bank that would kickstart positive equitable investment in our neighborhoods. It is clear that our City’s funds don’t belong in Wall Street banks that discriminate against New Yorkers of more color and finance destructive corporations. By mimicking successful public banking models that exist in places like North Dakota, we could exercise democratic control over the government’s purse strings, make community-driven investments, and ensure fair access to financial resources. The State Legislature should pass S1762 (Sanders), which would grant the City the right to establish such an institution. Concurrently, the City should pass Intos. 2099 and 2100 to facilitate the bank’s creation.

The City and State must also end the outsized role of billionaires in post-COVID policy making. While the financial contributions of private companies, foundations, and philanthropists is greatly appreciated in this grave time of need, there are severe concerns that these contributions are creating a “pay-to-play” dynamic in regards to critical administrative decision-making. For example, Governor Cuomo gave Michael Bloomberg full authority to design the State’s vital testing and tracing program after he pledged 10 million dollars to this effort. This unprecedented decision to delegate critical program design to an unelected private citizen grossly violates public trust.

44 www.publicbanknyc.org/about
Similarly, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation was given the keys to shape education policy through the Governor’s “Re-Imagine Education” taskforce, which includes no educators, parents, or students from New York City. This dynamic was repeated when the Governor named former Google CEO Eric Schmidt to lead a blue-ribbon commission on developing policies around telehealth, remote learning, and broadband access. While we should encourage everyone, including the wealthiest New Yorkers, to do their civic duty, issue experts and directly impacted people must be leading these conversations, not those that simply give the appearance of the most financial sway.

Finally, the State should **further anti-trust regulations** by passing A1812 (Dinowitz). Currently, State law prohibits two or more companies from conspiring to conduct market-fixing activities such as price-setting. However, no restrictions exist for when a single mega-company conducts anti-competitive behavior. This gap allows behemoths in the technology sector to get away with predatory pricing strategies that kneecap small businesses and harm consumers in the long run. This important bill would close this gap and set meaningful consequences for violations.

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EDUCATION

For too long, education in New York has furthered inequality rather than remedying it. Systemic underfunding, racial segregation, and marginalization of our most vulnerable students has created an educational system that is failing New York in many ways. This moment provides an opportunity for the City and State to enter a new era and advance excellence and equity in the Department of Education (DOE) and the City University of New York (CUNY). In order to do so, the City and State must:

1. Fund the programmatic, capital, and staffing needs of our schools;
2. Implement transformational equity measures in our schools that desegregate classrooms and lift up youth communities who have been historically marginalized;
3. Decriminalize students and end the school-to-prison pipeline;
4. Re-open schools in a safe and smart way; and
5. Revitalize CUNY through real investments in our students, including moving towards a tuition-free model, ensuring access to basic necessities, and significantly improving staff salaries and working conditions.

2. Fund the DOE

Ensuring that our public schools are well-staffed, well-supported, and have the necessary equipment and other infrastructure must be a top priority for the City and State. Per State law, New York State owes New York City schools $1.13 Billion in Foundation Aid in order to provide a “sound basic education” to all students.\(^{49}\) It is critically important that the Governor and the State Legislature fulfill this fiscal obligation to the City. In order to fully fund Foundation Aid, the State should pass A10363 (Rosenthal) / S7378 (Jackson), by marginally increasing the tax rate of New Yorkers making over $1 million dollars and directing all subsequent revenue to this purpose. Doing so would allow the City to provide every school with full Fair Student Funding, which is the City’s weighted per-pupil funding formula that determines how much money each school should receive based on its number of students and those students’ needs.\(^{50}\) While discussions should be had around improving the formulas that determine Foundation Aid and Fair Student Funding moving forward, these legally-binding mechanisms must be met first.

\(^{49}\) [www.aqeny.org/school-district-owed/](http://www.aqeny.org/school-district-owed/)

During the pandemic, Governor Cuomo cut education spending by $1.1 billion, with lower-income school districts being hit the hardest. While he papered over these so-called Pandemic Adjustment cuts with federal pandemic relief funds, these federal funds were intended to supplement State funding, not replace it, in order to cover increased costs inherent in transitioning to remote schooling. Our Office is in support of the New York Board of Regents’ call to restore the entirety of the $1.1 billion Pandemic Adjustment cuts in the upcoming State budget.

Additionally, the City must restore the cuts of more than $772 million to the Department of Education made in this fiscal year’s budget. Our schools have immense needs related to overcoming pandemic-related challenges, dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline, and increasing educational standards. Now is the time to increase rather than decrease funding to the DOE. In addition, the City must reject the youth services cuts proposed by the Mayor including summer youth employment and activity programs, juvenile justice initiatives, and child welfare programs. In addition to being centers for education, schools are community centers that connect families with vital resources. The DOE’s budget must reflect this.

The City and State also need to commit to funding necessary staffing in schools. This includes increasing its number of teachers so that the DOE can lower its average class size of 26.1. Specifically, it must fund the Comptroller’s proposal to create a paid teacher residency program at an annual cost of $40 million that would provide a full year of high-quality experiential training in classrooms prior to teacher certification and lower teacher attrition rates.

52 ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/12/14/22175491/ny-regents-call-for-state-to-restore-school-district-dollars-lost-in-pandemic-adjustment
55 files.constantcontact.com/1c58f85b001/dbee05c0-341f-42cb-90d3-bdf595cac379.pdf
Additionally, we must increase the number of trained and supervised full-time guidance counselors and social workers, including peer counselors and full-time restorative justice coordinators so that police presence in schools can be fully replaced with a comprehensive, positive approach to safety and discipline. Critically, the ratio of students to guidance counselors should be reduced from 1:327 to 1:60 in schools of highest need and at least 1:100 in every other school. Additionally, the DOE must staff at least one restorative justice coordinator at every school. Further, 2% of schools lack a nurse on campus premises and the Department has resorted to contracting private nurses as a short-term fix. An immediate influx of 3,500 new staff members is needed at an estimated annual cost of $465.5 million. The DOE must immediately staff a full-time DOE employed nurse at every school.

Further, the City must fund the glaring infrastructure needs that many schools have. According to the City’s Asset Information Management System Report, the DOE has nearly $2.5 billion in capital needs. These needs, which include repairs, replacements, and major maintenance, must be fulfilled. Specifically, we must prioritize eradicating lead poisoning in schools once and for all, installing A/C in the over 13,000 classrooms that lack it, and building accessible infrastructure that will finally make all NYC schools fully compliant with ADA standards.

2. Ensure Equal Opportunity

66 years after the Brown v. Board of Education decision, it could not be more clear that racially integrated schools benefit all students academically, economically, and socially. It is shameful that New York City Public Schools remain some of the most segregated in the country. It is long overdue for the City to remedy this problem. Our Office is grateful to the City Council for passing this Office’s bill, Intro 1550-A, which codified the School Diversity Advisory Group. This group—made up of a diverse set of educators, parents, and students—will be continuing its leading role in researching, liaising with communities, and developing policies around desegregation. Their work must serve as a blueprint from which the City can develop and implement comprehensive desegregation measures. District 15’s successful parent-driven integration efforts should also be seen as a model for other schools.
One area in clear need of reform is the outdated Gifted and Talented system, which begins segregating four-year olds on the basis of testing “ability” before they are even able to read and write. This test essentially measures parents’ abilities to prepare their children for the test, resulting in severe racial and economic disparities in acceptance to the program.\textsuperscript{65} Our Office applauds the Mayoral Administration’s recent decision to end this test moving forward and the Panel for Education Policy’s courageous rejection of the proposed contract for administering this test in Spring 2021.\textsuperscript{66}

Further, the out-of-classroom isolation of ‘gifted and talented’ Elementary school students is itself flawed. Research shows that separating students by achievement levels at young ages pulls down students in the “general population” and does not help students who qualify as advanced.\textsuperscript{67} Our elementary educational system needs to phase in a \textit{school-wide enrichment model} that brings the benefits of the Gifted and Talented program to an achievement level-integrated classroom and ensures that all students, including those who are academically advanced, have the opportunity to learn at their own pace. This model would feature both individualized mastery-based modular learning and clustered learning that includes in-classroom grouping based on achievement level. These clusters would be dynamic throughout the year and subject-based so that students’ unique needs can be met.\textsuperscript{68} P.S. 9 in Brooklyn recently voted to transition to a schoolwide enrichment model after robust community engagement and can serve as an example of how schools and districts can approach this issue.\textsuperscript{69}

It is also critical that the DOE continue \textit{expanding 3-K} so that it becomes a universal program. The Mayor has proposed a $44 million cut from the expansion in the upcoming City Budget.\textsuperscript{70} This funding must be immediately prioritized. Additionally, there needs to be proactive outreach, enrollment assistance, and data reporting to ensure that low-income communities and communities of more color have the resources they need to utilize 3-K and Pre-K subsidies.

\textsuperscript{65} ny.chalkbeat.org/2019/4/16/21107936/as-new-york-city-makes-limited-changes-to-gifted-programs-the-regular-admissions-process-yields-pred
\textsuperscript{66} ny.chalkbeat.org/2021/1/28/22253729/nyc-testing-gifted-admissions
\textsuperscript{67} onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1756-5391.2009.01032.x
\textsuperscript{68} www.amny.com/oped/op-ed-its-time-to-learn-a-lesson-on-school-diversity/
\textsuperscript{69} www.ps9brooklyn.org/news/2020/01/schoolwide-enrichment-comes-to-ps9/
\textsuperscript{70} ny.chalkbeat.org/2020/4/7/21225439/de-blasio-proposes-over-221-million-in-nyc-education-cuts-including-pre-k-and-school-budgets
Additionally, each student has their own unique needs that often get lost in the DOE’s black-or-white classification systems. Our Office is proposing an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for All mandate through which the DOE would be required to develop targeted support for all students in conjunction with the students and their families. Without utilizing high-stakes testing, this plan would provide comprehensive portfolio reviews across individual subject areas, behavioral and developmental health, and issues pertaining to disabilities and English language learning. In doing so, students and parents would receive a more complete understanding of areas of needed improvement and be equipped with actionable strategies for addressing these areas.

Due to the unique challenges that English Language Learners and Multilingual Learners (ELLs and MLLs) face, they are likely disproportionately impacted by the transition to remote learning. Before the pandemic began, these students were found to have a dropout rate of 26%, the highest of any population subgroup. We must also work harder to ensure they have the resources they need to thrive. Unfortunately the fiscal year 2021 budget passed by the Mayor and City Council cuts funds for programs needed by ELLs and MLLs, including multi-lingual counselors, trauma responsive social workers, and connections to meals, housing, and other resources. These cuts must be restored in the upcoming budget.

The DOE and DYCD additionally need to improve their engagement with ELL and MLL parents by strengthening its language access resources, furthering partnerships with community-based organizations, and funding adult literacy programs. Further, we must support the 4,200 recently arrived immigrant youth ages 14-21 who are not enrolled in school and lack a high school diploma. In this aim, the DOE should implement the New York Immigration Coalition’s proposed $6 million 3-year pilot program to increase access to transfer schools in communities near where these youth live.

Like ELLs and MLLs, students with disabilities were likely disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and targeted remedies must be put in place. There are also structural, longer-term issues that have long needed to be addressed, including the DOE’s failure to fulfill the Individual Education Programs (IEPs) they are required by law to abide by. On the front end, the DOE must improve its unacceptably slow assessment procedures by hiring more school psychologists in order to reduce average caseload. Additionally, the Department needs to subsidize necessary evaluations that it cannot internally provide, such as neuropsychological evaluations, so that students can receive accurate diagnoses and develop concordant learning plans.

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72 Ibid.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
Further, the DOE must address its failing Impartial Hearing process, through which parents are supposed to be able to challenge the services (or lack thereof) given to their child. This can be done by adding properly-compensated staff to address the caseload backlog; fixing the sole Impartial Hearing Office’s physical infrastructure and adding additional offices; and improving bureaucratic procedures by implementing the recommendations made by the State Education Department in its report on the issue,\textsuperscript{75} as well those made by legal service providers.\textsuperscript{76} Lastly, the DOE must find ways to reduce average bus-travel times for students with disabilities and provide these students with the transportation support they need to be able to participate in after-school programs.

Also, the City must close the digital divide, which refers to the lack of access many lower-income students have to internet access and internet-capable devices. This divide has unquestionably resulted in these students experiencing disproportionate learning loss during the pandemic and poses concerns related to a potential second wave of the virus. As an immediate step, the DOE must commit to allowing all students to permanently keep the digital tablets they were issued at the start of the pandemic. However, as it has become clear that remote learning will continue in some form for the foreseeable future, we must provide older students with technology that has necessary features that tablets lack. This is why our Office has co-sponsored Intro. 2138 (Kallos), which would provide laptops to all public school students.

It is also absolutely critical that the City launches an all-hands-on-deck effort to immediately install Wi-Fi in all shelters that house youth. Students experiencing homelessness cannot be allowed to disproportionately suffer due to a lack of internet connectivity. Additionally, the Department should look to fully subsidize internet costs for low-income students and their families.

Finally, the DOE needs to adopt a culturally responsive curriculum that reflects the incredible diversity of New York City students. This includes prioritizing the histories and literary works of Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous people, as well as those of women and LBGTQ+ people. It also necessitates creating space for analyzing current events and connecting personal and family experiences to the classroom. Importantly, students must also be given the opportunity to process and heal from the trauma that all New Yorkers have endured during the pandemic. The DOE should additionally explore mechanisms to incentivize schools to implement these curricula.

\textsuperscript{75} www.politico.com/states/f/?id=00000170-9867-d855-a3f7-d8ff5cdb0000
\textsuperscript{76} www.documentcloud.org/documents/6471512-Final-Letter-to-NYSED-DOE.html
3. End the School-to-Prison Pipeline

As New York City re-imagines what public safety means, we must begin with our youngest New Yorkers. We must implement a finite goal to remove police infrastructure, culture, and practices from schools, and replace this criminalizing system with solutions led by youth, parents, and educators that center liberation and restorative justice. The role of adults and staff in our schools must be to address trauma, not to perpetuate it.

The NYPD currently assigns over 5,000 School Safety Agents and almost 200 uniformed NYPD Officers to New York City schools who are empowered to detain, arrest, and issue court summonses to students. The extremely punitive NYPD approach to disciplining children has created an atmosphere of fear in school hallways that is not conducive to learning as well as as a direct pipeline from schools to the criminal justice system. This holds especially true for Black and Latinx students, who despite constituting 67% of the student population, made up 92 percent of all arrests and summonses in 2016. New York City must remove police presence in our schools and invest in positive safety measures that include increasing school counselors, mental health staff, like psychologists, social workers, nurses and grief counselors, implementing restorative justice practices, and utilizing non-police crisis intervention.

The City must also end other avenues through which the NYPD has expanded its reach into schools. This includes the NYPD’s recently announced Youth Coordination Officer program, which has deployed 300 officers citywide to pre-emptively engage with youth who have not committed any crimes, but who they deem to be at-risk of criminal activity. It also includes the criminalizing practices of DOE’s Gang Prevention and Intervention Unit, which encourage teachers to serve as informants to the NYPD regarding arbitrary “identifiers” of gang activity including clothing styles and notebook doodles. This guidance falls outside the scope of the responsibilities of teachers and has contributed to the NYPD’s out-of-control expansion of its “Gang Database,” which has led to many young people of more color being unjustly surveilled without their knowledge. This racialized criminalization of youth must end and be replaced by positive investment.

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77 populardemocracy.org/sites/default/files/STPP_layout_web_final.pdf
79 theintercept.com/2020/02/13/new-york-city-schools-gang-law-enforcement/
Data from the DOE shows that 84% of suspensions are given to Black and Latinx students\(^{81}\) and further data from the Independent Budget Office shows that these students are given longer suspensions on average than their white counterparts, even when being disciplined for the same infractions.\(^{82}\) Suspensions are also disproportionately administered to students with disabilities, who receive 42.7% of all long-term suspensions despite only making up 18.7% of the overall student population.\(^{83}\) Research in New York City has shown that these suspensions directly cause lower standardized test scores and graduation rates.\(^{84}\) Suspension should only be used as an absolute last resort, when a school cannot reasonably ensure the safety of its students and staff with the student in question in the classroom. Under no circumstances should a student stop learning; suspensions must occur concurrently with individualized plans to ensure that students are able to access their education, and access to mental health and student support services.

In addition, the DOE should take steps to increase the safety of the areas surrounding schools during high-traffic times so that students feel safe going to and from school. In this aim, the City should pilot a Safe Corridor program that places civilian guards in high-risk areas before and after school in order to maintain the safety of these passageways. A comparable program at high schools in Chicago has been shown to decrease violent crime by 17 percent, decrease property crime by 11 percent, and increase school attendance by 11 percent.\(^{85}\) This pilot could begin at 25 schools at an estimated annual cost of $4.6 million.

4. Re-Open Safely

The full functionality of in-person schooling is critical to the academic achievement of students and the ability of their parents to work. However, in the current pandemic and any potential future wave, the City must ensure that reopening takes place safely on a timeline that meets the realities of present circumstances. Please see our Office’s White Paper: On Reopening New York City’s Schools for our data-driven proposal for a staged return that emphasizes health, community engagement, and proven best practices.

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\(^{81}\) Ibid.
\(^{82}\) ibo.nyc.ny.us/cgi-park2/2018/10/when-students-of-different-ethnicities-are-suspended-for-the-same-infraction-is-the-average-length-of-their-suspension-the-same/
\(^{83}\) Ibid.
\(^{84}\) www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/698454
\(^{85}\) chicagopolicyreview.org/2019/12/23/keeping-students-safe-positive-results-from-chicagos-safe-passage-program/
5. Revitalize CUNY

It is critical that the City and State prioritize funding CUNY. Since Governor Cuomo took office in 2011, state aid to CUNY has decreased by 5% when accounting for inflation. Unfortunately, this continuous decrease has been accelerated due to the pandemic, with CUNY colleges already cutting their course offerings this semester. The Governor and State Legislature must ensure that CUNY can serve as an engine for mobility during the difficult economic times that are certain to follow the pandemic. The Mayor and City Council must also increase the City’s contribution to CUNY funding. For a detailed look at our Office’s proposals regarding CUNY funding, please see our Office’s report, Addressing the Underfunding of CUNY, New York’s Engine of Mobility, Innovation, and Economic Support.

The goal must be to reduce the cost of tuition and move towards a tuition-free CUNY. One key way to do this is to close the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) gap, which refers to the difference between the maximum of $5,000 that the State provides for eligible students in TAP and the actual cost of CUNY, which is $6,930 for four-year colleges. Closing the gap would cost the state an estimated $101.2 million this upcoming year. Additionally, the State needs to increase the efficacy of the Excelsior Scholarship by lowering its annual credit requirements to accommodate working students, increasing the income threshold, and ending the practice of turning the award into a loan for students who lose eligibility. Further, the City and State need to ensure that the recently passed DREAM Act, which opened state tuition assistance to undocumented students, is fully utilized by conducting a $0.5 million robust outreach and education campaign.

In order to create a new funding stream for CUNY, my Office is in support of legislation that would require private universities to pay property taxes on all future real estate purchases and direct all subsequent revenue to CUNY. Under current New York State Real Property Tax Law, private universities are exempted from all property tax obligations. Thus, Columbia University and New York University, who have amassed the 7th and 10th largest real estate portfolios in New York City, pay nothing in property taxes despite

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86 www.thenation.com/article/society/new-york-cuomo-cuny-cuts/
88 www.psc-cuny.org/issues/close-tap-gap
89 www.cuny.edu/financial-aid/tuition-and-college-costs/tuition-fees/#undergraduate-tuition
91 ny.curbed.com/2018/9/14/17860172/new-york-10-biggest-property-owners
having endowments of $10.95 billion dollars\textsuperscript{92} and $4.3 billion.\textsuperscript{93} Their rapid property expansions have negatively impacted the communities where the campuses are based, exacerbating the problems of rising rents and displacement. We must end this tax exemption, which functions as a subsidy for wealthy private universities to displace community members.

Additionally, the City and State need to take steps to ensure the well-being of CUNY students. In 2019, the City Council created a fund that provides CUNY community college students below the federal poverty line with $400 to spend on campus food. This program was cut in the 2021 Budget, and must immediately be restored and expanded to include all students with family incomes of less than $30,000. This program would cost an estimated $39.4 million annually and should be jointly covered by the City and State. Further, CUNY needs to revoke its $120 “Health and Wellness” fee that is functioning as a tuition increase this school year. While the mental health services that this fee is covering must be prioritized, the City and State, rather than the students, should be covering its estimated $9 million cost. CUNY should also commit to scaling up its childcare programs in order to support the 12% of students who are parents.\textsuperscript{94} Unfortunately, the 2021 City Budget cut this expansion’s funding by $90,000. This funding should be fully restored in the upcoming budget.

Another important part of CUNY student wellness is ensuring that its students, 77% of whom are of more color, are not hyper-surveilled by the police in their place of learning.\textsuperscript{95} Our Office is in solidarity with PSC CUNY’s resolution that calls to limit NYPD’s presence on CUNY campuses to emergency situations where their services are needed.\textsuperscript{96}

CUNY must also drastically improve the conditions of its professors, including adjuncts. On an immediate level, it must do everything possible to maintain the level of course offerings provided in 2019, avoid further layoffs, and rehire adjuncts that have been laid off for the upcoming semester. Additionally, CUNY should raise adjunct salaries to at least $7,000 per course to ensure adjunct professors receive an equitable wage for teaching a full course load and can provide students with adequate attention and resources needed to ensure success. Further, CUNY needs to develop a larger full-time faculty base, with a dedicated pipeline for adjuncts to transition to full-time.

\textsuperscript{92} www.finance.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/Finance%20Documents/Financial%20Reports/financials2019.pdf
\textsuperscript{93} www.nyu.edu/content/dam/nyu/investmentOffice/documents/2019-08-31%20NYU%20Endowment%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20FINAL.pdf
\textsuperscript{94} www.amny.com/education-2/city-council-members-to-host-oversight-hearing-on-cuny-childcare-facilities/
\textsuperscript{95} www.cuny.edu/irdatabook/rpts2_AY_current/ENRL_0015_RACE_TOT_PCT.rpt.pdf
\textsuperscript{96} www.psc-cuny.org/sites/default/files/Resolution_on_Defunding_NYPD.pdf
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: EDUCATION & OPPORTUNITY

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS: EDUCATION & OPPORTUNITY *(Budget requests in italics)*

**Opportunity**

1. Build Worker Power
   - Two weeks paid personal time- [Intro. 800](#) (Public Advocate Williams)
   - Unemployment assistance- DOL to improve infrastructure and increase staffing, reinstate weekly $600 Pandemic Unemployment Compensation
   - End wage theft- hire 115 additional investigators (**$9 million- State**), conduct proactive outreach to at-risk workers, EMPIRE Worker Protection Act- [S12](#) (Hoylman), SWEAT bill, [A776](#) (Rosenthal) / [S2762](#) (Ramos)
   - Eliminate sub-minimum wage- Governor to implement One Fair Wage
   - Just cause protections- [Intro. 1923](#) (Kallos)
   - Evaluate impact of Taylor Law no-strike provision
   - Make essential workers whole and prepare for second wave- hazard pay, PPE, line-of-duty death benefits
   - Pass Federal Heroes’ Fund- [Res. 1443](#) (Public Advocate Williams)
   - Require hazard pay in relevant procurement processes- [Intro. 2124](#) (Public Advocate Williams)
   - Gig Workers’ Rights- end misclassification, portable benefits, outreach for Freelance Isn’t Free Act and Local Law 172 (**$0.5 million- City**)
   - Rights for Delivery Workers- bathroom and waiting room access, fair wages, increased safety, right to organize
   - Apply human rights law protections to domestic workers- [Int. 339](#) (Rose)
   - Make undocumented and formerly incarcerated New Yorkers eligible for professional licenses- mimic New Jersey’s [S2455](#)

2. Develop New York City’s Workforce
   - Increase funding for Unity Works (**$0.75 million- City**), TEPI (**$2.8 million-City**), and CUNY EDGE
   - Universal summer jobs- [Int. 1474](#) (Kallos), 100,000 slots this year (**$70 million- City**)
   - Youth summer jobs for non-citizens- [Intro. 1670](#) (Public Advocate Williams)
   - Community Labor Agreements for large private companies- local hiring, training programs, workplace conditions
   - Pathways to union membership in traditionally marginalized communities
   - Upskilling the workforce- Life-Long Learning Accounts
   - Public Works program to provide jobs and address city’s needs
   - Utilize CUNY and CBOs for training programs
3. Support Small Businesses and Non-Profits

- Interest-free loan program for small businesses, non-profit organizations and freelance workers- *Int. 1990* (Public Advocate Williams)
- SBS reporting on pandemic impact- *Intro. 2126* (Public Advocate Williams)
- Address rapidly rising commercial rents- Small Business Jobs Survival Act, *Int. 737* (Rodriguez)
- Support minority, immigrant, and women owned businesses- expand Restaurant Revitalization Program (*$3 million- City*), prioritize in emergency contracting processes, increase translations of critical materials
- Support street vendors- access to SBS services and pandemic relief
- Worker co-ops- increase funding to WCBDI (*$3.07 million- City*), develop justice-oriented framework for marijuana legalization by mimicking Cambridge *Ordinance No. 1409*
- CBOs- guarantee uninterrupted contract payments, utilize for large scale initiatives, *Intro. 2137* (Kallos)

4. Reject Austerity, Raise Revenue

- Allow City to employ long-term borrowing of at least $4 billion
- Federal government support
- Higher marginal tax rates on the highest earning New Yorkers- *A5092* (De La Rosa) / *S4482* (Ramos), *A5442* (Taylor) / *S1513* (Sanders)
- Close carried interest loophole- *A3976* (Aubry) / *S999* (Hoylman)
- Implementing an heir tax on the highest 1% of inheritances.
- Repeal Trump corporate profit tax cuts
- Stock transfer tax- *S1406* (Sanders)
- Eliminate rebates for taxes on stock buybacks- *A2422* (Niou) / *S4528* (May)
- Remove sales tax exemption on private planes and yachts- *A555* (Carroll) / *S430* (Hoylman) and *A918* (Carroll) / *S429* (Hoylman)

5. Challenge Corporate Power

- Stop engaging in the “race to the bottom” to attract investment
- Public Bank- *S1762* (Sanders)
- End the outsized role of billionaires in post-COVID policymaking
- Further State antitrust regulations- *A1812* (Dinowitz)
Education

1. Fund the DOE
   - Fulfill obligations and avoid austerity
     1. New York State to provide New York City Foundation Aid it is legally owed ($1.1 billion - State)
     2. Reject the Governor’s Pandemic Adjustment budget cuts ($1.1 billion)
     3. Restore City’s cuts to DOE ($772 million)
   - Staff
     1. Increase number of teachers to reduce class sizes- paid teacher residency program ($40 million - City and State)
     2. Student to guidance counselor ratio- Reduce from 1:327 to 1:100 and 1:60 in schools of highest need
     3. At least 1 DOE nurse and restorative justice coordinator in every school
   - Infrastructure- Address $2.5 billion in capital needs over four years including to eradicate lead poisoning, ensure A/C in every classroom, and full ADA accessibility

2. Ensure Equal Opportunity
   - Further racial integration- follow the leads of the School Diversity Advisory Group and District 15
   - Replace elementary school Gifted and Talented model with school-wide enrichment model
   - Keep 3-K expansion on track ($44 million - City)
   - Individualized Education Programs for All- personal K-12 targeted support for academic achievement and behavioral/developmental health
   - English Language Learners and Multilingual Learners
     1. Restore cuts to multilingual counselors and trauma-responsive social workers
     2. Improve the DOE’s engagement with ELL and MLL parents and increase language access
     3. Transfer school pilot for older immigrant youth ($2 million - City)
   - Students with disabilities
     1. Fulfill IEP mandates- hire more school psychologists, subsidize necessary evaluations, reform impartial hearing process
     2. Reduce travel times and provide transportation to extracurriculars
   - Close digital divide- allow students to keep remote learning devices permanently, Intro. 2138 (Kallos), provide free internet for low-income students and their families
   - Culturally responsive curriculum- create incentives for schools to implement
3. End the School-to-Prison Pipeline
   - Remove police presence in schools
     1. Invest in positive safety measures- restorative justice, mental health staff
     2. End Youth Coordination Officer program and DOE Gang Prevention and Intervention Unit
   - Minimize suspensions
   - Safe Corridor pilot ($4.6 million- City)

4. Re-open Safely
   - White Paper: On Reopening New York City’s Schools
   - Allow for multiple windows of opting-in to in-person learning

5. Revitalize CUNY
   - Move towards a tuition-free CUNY per Addressing the Underfunding of CUNY, New York’s Engine of Mobility, Innovation, and Economic Support by closing TAP gap ($101.2 million- City), increasing scope of Excelsior Scholarship, and conducting comprehensive outreach on DREAM Act ($0.5 million- City and State)
   - New funding stream- require private universities to pay property taxes on all future real estate purchases and direct all subsequent revenue to CUNY
   - Ensure the wellbeing of students by restoring and expanding food security program for low-income students ($39.4 million- City and State), revoking $120 “Health and Wellness” fee ($9 million- City and State), and keep childcare program expansion on track ($90,0000 City)
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: HOUSING EQUITY
All New Yorkers should have the right to a stable and affordable home. But a number of factors, including skyrocketing rents, deteriorating housing conditions, and the economic impact of the pandemic, have left millions of New Yorkers struggling to make this right a reality. To comprehensively address this housing crisis, the City and State need to implement a housing equity agenda that shifts power from real estate interests to tenants by prioritizing the following principles:

1. Advance real income-targeted affordability measures that keep rent increases and evictions rare, provide targeted support to those who need it most, and ensure a robust stock of low and medium cost housing;
2. Ensure equitable development and end the era of mass gentrification and racialized displacement;
3. Introduce new mechanisms for enforcement and accountability for housing conditions that affect our health and quality of life;
4. Institute fundamental improvements in how we preserve NYCHA, support residents, and correct decades of systematic divestment; and
5. Implement homelessness prevention strategies and provide more immediate and humane solutions for New Yorkers who find themselves homeless, with a focus on permanent housing.
1. BOOST INCOME-TARGETED AFFORDABILITY AND KEEP TENANTS IN THEIR HOMES

Rent and Evictions

With over 900,000 New York City residents out of a job, it is clear that the State needs to pass A2617 (Niou), which would cancel rent payments for tenants across the state who are facing financial hardship because of the pandemic and allow landlords to write off that amount from the mortgages they owe. This bill would provide much-needed relief to renters by establishing prohibitions against fines, fees, termination of tenancy, or eviction for non-payment of canceled rent until ninety days after the pandemic ends.

Action from the New York City Rent Guidelines Board has stabilized rents for those with one-year leases beginning October 1, 2020. While this is a step in the right direction, many groups are falling through the cracks. Those whose leases were renewed between July 1, 2020 and October 1, 2020 are likely to face an increase of either 1.5% for a one-year lease or 2.5% for a two-year lease. A more comprehensive rent freeze from both the City Rent Guidelines Board and the State Division of Homes and Community Renewal (HCR) must be implemented to prevent more landlords from increasing rent rates for the duration of this crisis.

The City and State additionally need to strengthen rent stabilization by equipping the HCR with the authority and staffing it needs to enforce the critical Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019. This must include robust outreach to rent-stabilized tenants that informs them of their rights to challenge rent overcharges through the HCR.

New Yorkers who are unable to make rent have severe concern about their ability to remain in their homes. The temporary eviction moratorium passed in December, 2020, is an important first step in furthering housing security. Now, the State needs to work to ensure that evictions and foreclosures do not occur until at least a year after the statewide disaster emergency expires. Moving forward, the State needs to pass S3082 (Salazar), which would prevent no-cause evictions by prohibiting landlords from removing tenants from apartments without an order from a judge. As Housing Justice for All has made clear, “evictions are a cause, not an effect of poverty,” and they must be minimized. The State also must repeal the Urstadt Law, which subjects any policy changes that would expand rent control to the approval of the Governor and State Legislature. New York City must be able to legislate on this critical issue.

98 www.housingjusticeforall.org/covid19
Finally, action must be taken to provide relief for homeowners and small property owners. The State should extend the foreclosure moratorium so that folks can remain in their homes during what is likely to be an extended period of economic difficulty. Additionally, all utility debt accrued over the course of the pandemic should be forgiven. Further, it should join with the federal government to provide direct financial support to homeowners so that they are able to pay their mortgages once the moratorium expires. To maintain community stability and further generational wealth, we have an imperative to keep homeowners in their homes. In addition, the State and City should further no-interest loans and grants to small property owners whose tenants are unable to make rent.

**Income-Targeted Affordability Mechanisms**

From 2005 to 2015, New York City’s population aged 65 and older increased by more than triple the rate of other New Yorkers. However, despite this shift in population demographics and the need for investment in senior services and housing, LiveOn NY has estimated that City and State funds for older New Yorkers decreased by 0.8% overall in recent budgets. While the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) serves a critical role in supporting seniors, it must be strengthened in order to reduce rent burdens. Currently, 85% of SCRIE recipients are rent burdened (spending more than 30% of their income on rent), and 55% are severely rent burdened (spending more than 50% of their income on rent). In order to rectify this, the City and State should dedicate $250 million next fiscal year to implementing a **rent subsidy for SCRIE recipients** that would effectively cap rent to 30% of their income. The City and State should also implement a similar subsidy for recipients of the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE).

We must also ensure that renters know about the SCRIE and DRIE programs. As such, there should be a SCRIE and DRIE "opt-in" option on rent-regulated lease renewals so that tenants are aware that they may qualify for these supports and have an application sent to them upon signing a lease. In addition, applications should be distributed at city intake centers such as HRA offices. The Mayor and City Council must ensure the continuation of SCRIE and DRIE, as well as the Senior Citizen Homeowners’ Exemption (SCHE) and the Disabled Homeowners’ Exemption (DHE), by increasing and baselining City funding towards these programs in the next Fiscal Year budget.

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100 comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/aging-with-dignity-a-blueprint-for-serving-nycs-growing-senior-population/
101 citylimits.org/2020/01/28/city-and-state-budgets-pose-challenges-for-aging-new-yorkers/
102 www.enterprisecommunity.org/download?fid=6810&nid=4614
103 www.enterprisecommunity.org/download?fid=6810&nid=4614
Mitchell-Lama is a critical program that has provided quality, stable housing for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers for more than half a century. Action must be taken to protect existing Mitchell-Lama stock, which has decreased from its peak of 139,000 units to less than 33,000, and is being further threatened by deterioration and privatization. This includes funding for needed capital repairs, reforming cooperative board governance to ensure efficacy and transparency, and implementing policies that disincentivize opting out of the program. Additionally, as Tenants & Neighbors has argued, the City should move to recapture former Mitchell-Lama units by utilizing a combination of Article XI agreements and project-basing enhanced vouchers. The State also needs to take action that builds upon this Office’s recently passed bill to require Mitchell-Lama waitlist transparency, Intro. 716, that removes corruption from the application process and ensures equal opportunity in obtaining an affordable unit.

Further, the State should address the issue of unitsaging out of the Mitchell-Lama program by launching a **Mitchell-Lama 2.0** program that creates new developments with units that are subject to its predecessor’s income-targeted affordability criteria. This would revitalize the City’s affordable housing stock and mimic the success of the initial program. Moving forward, the City should additionally explore creating new programs that mimic the ability that Mitchell-Lama provides for participants to move from renting units to owning them.

At the municipal level, we have to **ensure that housing developments in our subsidy programs are abiding by the related requirements**. When the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)’s Tax Incentives Program (TIP) determines the level of Article XI tax exemption for which a project is eligible, a member of the department, along with a representative for the Assistant Commissioner of Housing Incentives, must meet with the tenants who reside at the project site to inform them of their new subsidy program and their rights under the new regulatory framework. Additionally, HPD needs to create an Office within its agency with representatives tenants in an Article XI dwelling can contact if there is an issue or violation that needs to be addressed. This Office should develop rules and regulations about the rights of tenants to organize and information on tenant recourse for poor conditions.

We must also move to increase homeownership in communities of more color by **cracking down on mortgage discrimination**. The New Economy Project has found that even when controlling for income, loan size, and other factors, Black New Yorkers were rejected twice as often as white New Yorkers when applying for mortgages to buy a home, and Latinx New Yorkers were rejected 1.5 times as often. The City and State must divest public funds from banks that are found to have engaged in systematic discriminatory practices. Further, as explained in the Education & Opportunity section of this report, New York should take steps to establishing a public bank that would better ensure equitable financing.

In addition, we have to **eliminate housing discrimination in co-op sales**. This issue is particularly important given that co-ops are a critical pathway to home ownership in communities of more color. The City Council should pass our Office’s bill **Intro. 822**, which would regulate the application process for cooperative apartments in order to ensure that applicants receive timely approvals or denials. Together with **Intro. 761** (Lander), which would require co-op boards to provide reasons for denials, this legislation would provide clarity for applicants of more color who question if a denial or a delay in their application has occurred due to racial discrimination.

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2. ENSURE EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT AND HALT DISPLACEMENT

It is clear that rezonings in New York City over the past two decades have increased the cost of living in affected areas and displaced many longtime residents of color. For example, as Churches United for Fair Housing has documented, the Greenpoint/Williamsburg rezoning implemented in 2003 contributed to a decrease of about 15,000 Latinx residents in the area. Policymakers can no longer claim ignorance to the repeated consequences, both intended and unintended, of government-sponsored development. The City Council should pass this Office’s bill, Intro. 1572, which would require all Land Use actions that require an environmental review to conduct a racial impact study to evaluate how the proposed action would affect communities of more color and affirmatively further fair housing under the federal Fair Housing Act.

It is also critical that the City follows through with its commitments made to communities around existing rezonings. For example, as a condition of the East New York rezoning, the City committed to operating the Basement Apartment Conversion Pilot Program (BACPP) in Brooklyn’s Community District 5. This program has successfully launched and begun to convert substandard and illegal basement units into safe, legal, and rentable apartments at low or no cost. However, this program was cut in the FY 2021 Budget. The City should restore the $1.09 million in funding for BACPP in the upcoming budget. Further, if the program proves successful it should be scaled citywide, so that the New Yorkers who live in the City’s estimated 114,000 basement apartments can benefit from this crucial service.

The City must also overhaul its current approach to Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH). While this plan claims to incorporate affordable housing into neighborhoods that are rezoned to increase housing development, in reality it prioritizes construction of market-rate units and fails to provide sufficient units for those earning low incomes. In order to rectify this, MIH needs to significantly increase its percentages of new units allocated to affordable housing and ensure that income-targeted affordability criteria match the economic reality of low-income New Yorkers. New mechanisms must also be implemented to make MIH units available to those who are homeless or housing insecure.

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107 static1.squarespace.com/static/5dc0429de5717c7ff1cae0d0/t/5de6c0e683bec649d37ab0cc/1575403753814/Zoning+and+Racialized+Displacement+in+Nyc.pdf
108 Ibid.
The City must also cease its practice of selling public land to private developers and instead use this land for the purpose of 100% affordable housing. In 2017, the City Council passed the Housing Not Warehousing Act, which requires the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to publish reports on the vacant buildings and lots under its jurisdiction and their feasibility for development into affordable housing. The City must take the next step and use this critical data to initiate the conversion of vacant spaces into 100% affordable housing for low- and moderate-income and homeless people, whenever feasible.

It is critically important that the City prioritizes affordable housing preservation. Whereas preservation allows tenants to remain in affordable housing units, the construction process can take years from the conceptualization of a new building to the point where families who need stable housing are able to move in. As such, a major focus must be placed on using repairs and remediation to ensure that already-existing affordable housing units have healthy and habitable living conditions and remain affordable.

The City and State should also expand Community Land Trusts (CLTs) through its budgetary processes and legislation. In this housing model, a community-governed non-profit purchases land and then leases housing to residents at a guaranteed affordable rate. This model combats real estate speculation, ensures income-targeted affordability, and creates democratic structures for collective decision making. Our Office supports Int. 1977 (Rivera), which would give CLTs and other non-profit affordable housing entities the right of first refusal in purchasing any city-owned property that is currently empty or whenever city-owned property is made available. This should include foreclosed, abandoned buildings or when property is removed from negligent landlords through the 7A program.

Lastly, the City needs to reverse the 40% cuts to HPD’s capital budget made in the 2021 Fiscal Year budget. A study from Council Member Brad Lander, Council Member Vanessa Gibson, and the New York Housing Conference estimates that this cut will result in a reduction of over 5,000 new and 15,000 preserved affordable and supportive housing units in the next few years.

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110 furmancenter.org/coredata/directory/entry/one-dollar-lot-sales
3. ENSURE TENANTS HAVE THE HOUSING CONDITIONS THEY DESERVE

**HPD Enforcement and Accountability**

Indoor hazards such as mold, leaks, vermin, and broken elevators have severe impacts on quality of life as well as health. However, HPD is failing to address these issues in a variety of ways.

In Fiscal Year 2019, HPD code enforcement complaints were up 22.92% from the previous year. However, staffing has not increased accordingly, which has resulted in unacceptably long response times. The City should allocate $4.5 Million to increased HPD inspection staffing in order to rectify this issue in the upcoming budget.

Additionally, HPD must seek to pursue full penalties of violations available to them by law, rather than accepting settlements for pennies on the dollar. Further, when these penalties are issued, HPD must ensure they are collected in full. A 2016 report from New York City Comptroller Stringer found that HPD’s collection rate was a meager 2.46 percent. This is unacceptable.

Since 2010, the Office of the Public Advocate has released an NYC Worst Landlord Watchlist, a breakdown of the 100 most egregiously negligent landlords in New York City as determined by widespread and repeated violations in buildings on the list. Our Office is currently aiming to create real accountability measures for the landlords on this list and other bad actors through our Office’s Worst Landlord Accountability Act. This legislative package includes Intro 2121, to maintain a certification of correction watch list and prohibit any listed landlord from certifying correction of violations in multiple dwellings without an inspection. This would prevent landlords already identified as bad actors from falsely claiming repairs have been made.

The Worst Landlord Accountability Act also includes Intro. 2122, which would require the city's department of Housing Preservation and Development to communicate with a complainant reporting Class C violations within 12 hours, and perform an inspection, if warranted, within 24 hours. HPD would

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112 data.cityofnewyork.us/Housing-Development/Housing-Maintenance-Code-Complaints/uwyv-629c
114 campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1102557709761&ca=bbc509ee-8346-48eb-8a29-ef4fa843e83e
also have to communicate regarding Class B violations within 24 hours, and perform an inspection within 48 hours. No violation can be closed until it has been certified to be corrected to the satisfaction of HPD.  

Other pieces of this package are Intro. 585, which would require landlords to proactively inform tenants if their building contains any rent-regulated apartments, and Intro. 810, which would require landlords to provide notice to their tenants prior to temporarily or permanently making building amenities unavailable.

Our Office is seeking to introduce additional bills as a part of this package that would:

- Increase penalties for Class A, B, and C HPD violations;
- Create a public awareness campaign informing tenants of their rights to report inadequate housing conditions and landlords’ failure to address those conditions;
- Require HPD to make criminal referrals to the Inspector General upon the discovery of deceptive or improper practices; and
- Limit the number of extensions that Housing Court can provide to landlords to cure all classes of violations.

**Preventative Pandemic Measures**

In this pandemic, the City has set new standards of cleanliness for our modes of transportation and workplaces, and it's clear we should do the same for our apartment buildings in order to protect our tenants from the spread of the virus. The City Council should pass this Office’s bill, Intro. 1975, which would create guidelines for landlords on cleaning, including:

- How to identify high-touch surfaces and examples of high-touch surfaces likely to be found in common areas of multiple dwellings;
- Frequency of cleaning;
- Cleaning methods; and
- How to sanitize cleaning implements such as mops and cloths.

115 Ibid.
Utilities

Heat, hot water, gas, and electricity are necessities that promote the health and well-being of individuals and communities. Our Office is in strong support of the State’s moratorium on utility shut-offs and urges the State to take further action to mandate reconnections for utility services that were terminated before the COVID-19 state of emergency. Moving forward, the City must shift to a Public Power utilities model that would lower costs and improve services for New Yorkers. Please see the Infrastructure and Environmental Justice section of this report for more information and our Office’s report, Municipalizing New York City’s Electric Grid for a detailed breakdown of our plan for electricity.

Environmental Health Hazards

For years, negligent environmental practices have disproportionately harmed New York neighborhoods that are of more color and of lower income. As New York City aims to create a Green New Deal, it is paramount that we implement policies that recognize the inextricable link between environmental justice and housing justice, and repair the damage done to the indoor and outdoor areas where New Yorkers live, work, and play. The Infrastructure and Environmental Justice section of this report provides a roadmap for how this framework can be put into place.

4. INVEST IN NYCHA AND ITS RESIDENTS

**Funding**

Decades-long under-investment in NYCHA has created at least a $32 billion gap in capital needs and has had immense impacts on the health, safety, and well-being of its residents.\(^\text{117}\) On the Federal level, the Department of Housing and Urban Development needs to commit to fully funding NYCHA rather than cutting expenditures, as it has continuously sought to do.\(^\text{118}\) If budgetary support from the Oval Office does not occur, legislative action, including the passage of The Public Housing Emergency Response Act (Velázquez), which would fully close the $32 billion gap, must take place. The City and State must also dedicate significantly more funding to NYCHA through their respective budgetary processes. The State should also create additional streams of funding for NYCHA by passing legislation including A09041 (Epstein) / S7231 (Salazár), which would expand the mortgage recording tax to include private equity financed real estate acquisitions and dedicate all funding toward public housing.

**Inspections**

It is clear that NYCHA’s inspection and remediation processes are failing. Last year NYCHA failed to fix nearly 60,000 mold complaints.\(^\text{119}\) Additionally, there were 3,101 unplanned heating outages across NYCHA developments in winter 2018/2019, with an average length of 9 hours.\(^\text{120}\) Leaks that cause water damage and further degrade the already poor condition of the building’s elevators, interior walls, garbage compactors, and boilers, are also pervasive. Furthermore, NYCHA’s Federal Monitor has found that the agency has seriously failed to meet its mandates to identify and remediate the presence of lead paint in its facilities.\(^\text{121}\) In order to address the scale of these issues, an immediate investment of at least $2.5 billion from the City and State needs to be made in the upcoming fiscal year, with a commitment to further fund repairs moving forward. In addition, NYCHA must adopt any recommendations made by the Federal Monitor and the Department of Investigation in regards to the effectiveness of its inspection programs.

We know that decent housing is a critical healthcare mechanism and we must address that these conditions are more than just inconveniences—they are deteriorating the well-being of New Yorkers. The State Department of Health has found that 83% have a "severe condition" that poses a health hazard to residents. In addition to eliminating these hazards, the Federal government must develop mechanisms to fully cover all healthcare costs that are associated with health conditions that these hazards have caused.

**Policing**

NYPD patrols of NYCHA complexes conduct work that should be outside of the scope of municipal policing. Specifically, through Procedure No. 212-60 of the Patrol Guide, the Department has codified police enforcement of NYCHA House Rules, a code of conduct that includes regulations on activities that are explicitly not illegal such as “lingering” in lobbies. This overreach increases tension between police and community; puts residents at increased risk of eviction on account of repeated rule violations; and can serve as a way of bypassing Fourth Amendment restrictions on illegal police stops. As such, this practice must be reformed so that NYPD involvement in NYCHA is restricted to enforcing the law. In its place, alternative non-punitive mechanisms around ensuring quality of life should be implemented.

**Privatization**

NYCHA is a critically important public asset and efforts to privatize it through the Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) program, the New York City version of the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, must be subject to thorough review. PACT re-categorizes NYCHA as Section 8 housing, which allows private for-profit real estate companies to take management. Nationwide, RAD implementation has been shown to result in increased rents. Additionally, at the Ocean Bay Houses, the NYCHA location where PACT was first implemented, eviction rates have significantly increased. Moving forward, protections must be in place to prevent an escalation in evictions in developments where PACT is underway. Further, the City should consider pausing its plan to apply PACT to one-third of NYCHA developments until a better way forward to protect tenants is detailed in the plan. There also needs to be a real commitment to funding needed repairs alongside the State and Federal government. For all complexes in which PACT conversion

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125 [scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4812&context=caselrev](http://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4812&context=caselrev)
126 [citylimits.org/2018/03/27/federal-audit-demands-better-oversight-of-program-key-to-nychas-survival-plan/](http://citylimits.org/2018/03/27/federal-audit-demands-better-oversight-of-program-key-to-nychas-survival-plan/)
127 [citylimits.org/2019/08/14/nycha-evicitons-rad-oceanbay/](http://citylimits.org/2019/08/14/nycha-evicitons-rad-oceanbay/)
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: HOUSING EQUITY

is being actively considered, tenants’ voices should be leading the discussions. For the developments in which PACT is already underway, the City needs to conduct a comprehensive community engagement effort that informs residents of what this shift entails and explains the rights they have as tenants. Further, PACT cannot be a substitute for all levels of government providing NYCHA with the funding it is owed. The strategy for the recent conversion of NYCHA complexes Chelsea, Chelsea Addition, and Elliot houses on the West Side of Manhattan, can serve a model for any future conversions.

**Task Force**

In decision-making processes that impact the lives of NYCHA tenants, the voices of tenants themselves have long been excluded. The City Council should pass this Office’s legislation, Intro. 1709, which would begin to address this by creating a NYCHA Tenant Task Force. This task force will study prevailing issues, identify solutions, recommend changes to the housing authority’s policies regarding tenant engagement, and address tenants’ concerns about building safety and quality of life.

**5. PROVIDE REAL SUPPORT TO NEW YORKERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

**Permanent Housing**

Our primary tool in addressing homelessness must be to provide New Yorkers with stable, permanent housing. In addition to stabilizing rents, minimizing evictions, and increasing the affordable housing stock, the State can further this aim by passing the Home Stability Support (HSS) bill, A2278 (Hevesi)/ S856 (Krueger). This bill would create a new statewide rent supplement for families and individuals who are eligible for public assistance benefits and who are facing eviction, homelessness, or loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous living conditions. This state-funded rent supplement would provide a bridge between the current shelter allowance and 85% of the fair market rent determined by HUD.128 An analysis by the Comptroller’s Office projects that in New York City, HSS will reduce the shelter population over a ten-year period by an estimated 80 percent among families with children, 60 percent among adult families, and 40 percent among single adults.129

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128 [www.homestabilitysupport.com/about-overview](http://www.homestabilitysupport.com/about-overview)
129 [www.nytimes.com/2017/03/02/nyregion/homeless-shelters-rent-subsidies.html?_r=0]
Despite broad support in the State Senate and Assembly, Governor Cuomo has repeatedly blocked the passage of HSS. As the Governor stalls on this critical bill, the City needs to strengthen its existing rent supplement, CityFHEPS, which helps residents avoid eviction and provides homeless individuals with a pathway to permanent housing. Currently, CityFHEPS vouchers are capped at $1,236 for a single-person household, but there are only around 16,480 units for rent for less than $1,249 per month in the City.\textsuperscript{130} Due to the difficulty in finding an apartment with rent low enough to be eligible for the voucher, 11,000 individuals with a CityFHEPS voucher still live in the City’s shelter system.\textsuperscript{131} The City should double its contribution to CityFHEPS in order to raise the cap on allowable rents and to expand the number of vouchers.

It is critical that this expansion includes making homeless youth eligible for CityFHEPS. Currently, homeless youth who reside in youth shelters run by DYCD are ineligible for CityFHEPS. Consequently, only 9% of homeless New Yorkers who age out of the youth shelter system upon turning 21 years old are able to secure permanent housing.\textsuperscript{132} As a result, many become street homeless or enter adult shelters, which have extremely substandard living conditions and pose serious safety risks for the up to 40% of homeless youth in New York City who are LGBTQ+.\textsuperscript{133} Mayor de Blasio committed to making this much-needed policy change in his 2017 report, Turning the Tide on Homelessness in New York City, but has failed to follow through on this promise in the years since.\textsuperscript{134}

Lastly, our Office opposes any barriers to housing support around joblessness, mental health issues, or addiction. We must address homelessness through the Housing First framework advocated for by Pathways to Housing. This framework prioritizes getting people into homes without any prohibitive conditions, and then combining housing with supportive treatment services.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{130} citylimits.org/2019/09/12/homeless-voucher-cityfheps/
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} www.alifornycenter.org/about-us/lgbtq-youth-crisis/#:~:text=Studies%20have%20found%20that%20LGBTQ,population%20in%20New%20York%20City.
\textsuperscript{134} www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/turning-the-tide-on-homelessness.pdf
\textsuperscript{135} www.nycservice.org/organizations/1899
**Shelters**

Quite simply, the City’s shelter system has been failing for some time now, and the pandemic has exacerbated existing needs. Shelters were overcrowded before the pandemic and have been unable to comply with social distancing requirements, meaning shelter residents are at high risk for infection of the virus. The mortality rate for sheltered homeless people in New York City has reached a tragic 321 deaths per 100,000 people during the pandemic.¹³⁶ DHS should expand the use of individualized hotel rooms to isolate those who are infected, at-risk, or unable to socially distance at a shelter due to capacity issues. I condemn the New Yorkers who have organized in attempts to end the hotel program in their neighborhoods, due to perceived quality of life concerns. These actions are rooted in bias, not reality, and have set off a chain of harmful displacements of fellow New Yorkers.

Additionally, shelters need to immediately implement best practices that can reduce the spread including non-contact thermometers, social distancing protocols, and comprehensive sanitation coupled with posted information and verbal communication about these best practices.

**Long-term failures in maintenance, supply, and safety must also be addressed.** Our Office is in solidarity with the following demands from the Coalition for the Homeless:

- All shelters must serve individuals and families with dignity, provide a safe environment, and be adequately staffed at all times to provide meaningful social services, housing search assistance, and physical as well as mental health care and/or referral;
- Provision of food in shelters must be reformed to improve quality, expand oversight, adequately accommodate the nutritional needs of shelter residents, and allow for dietary, religious, and other requirements; and
- The State must reverse harmful cuts to New York City’s emergency shelter system that have resulted in the State short-changing the City by hundreds of millions of dollars over the past six years, and share equally with the City in the non-Federal cost of sheltering families and individuals.¹³⁷

The City Council should also pass this Office’s bill, Intro. 805, which would create a task force that brings together stakeholders to create actionable recommendations on how to improve safety in homeless shelters.


In addition, changes to shelter policies must be made in order to rectify systemic harm experienced by homeless New Yorkers who are transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC). First, DHS must implement TGNC-specific floors and halls in shelters in each borough. Second, HRA must create a designated priority status for TGNC people for rental assistance vouchers, supportive housing, and other sustainable options. And third, DHS must ensure access to necessary gender-affirming healthcare while in shelter.

We must also significantly increase Safe Haven capacity. Safe Havens are lower-threshold shelters with less rules and regulations that appeal to the over 3,000 street homeless New Yorkers who refuse services provided by traditional shelters.138 The City can reduce street homelessness by expanding the number of Safe Haven beds by 500 through a $24 million increase in funding in the upcoming budget.139 Further, as the Coalition for the Homeless has recommended, traditional shelters should apply elements of the Safe Haven shelter model to general shelters to make them more humane, respectful, and suitable for homeless individuals.140

While it is critical that the City address the numerous flaws in the shelter system, it is also important that we move away from defaulting to shelters in order to address homelessness at the expense of providing permanent housing. With the number of City shelter residents increasing by 143 percent over the past decade—from 7,700 in December 2009 to 18,700 in December 2019—it is clear that this dynamic is occurring.141

**Access to Supportive Services**

We must ensure that New Yorkers have equitable access to supportive, trauma informed, gender affirming, and culturally competent homelessness services. Through these services, we must address stigma as a root cause of inequity that further perpetuates challenges for those struggling with homelessness. These New Yorkers have immense untapped potential and it is our responsibility to provide them supportive and life-affirming services that allow for this potential to be realized.

First and foremost, we must work to reevaluate existing social services and prioritize programs that are truly accessible across lived experience and take language barriers, education, trauma, mental health challenges, and frustration with government services into account. Additionally, we must ensure that

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138 [www.bowery.org/homelessness/](http://www.bowery.org/homelessness/)
141 Ibid.
wrap-around services aimed towards housing stability, permanency, and sustainability with integrated pathways to income-targeted affordability are offered continuously through one's involvement with DHS and DYCD. This will require a collaborative cross-agency approach to trauma-informed programming that breaks down how poverty, homelessness, and incarceration all exacerbate one another. Necessary services include:

- Guidance counselors;
- Mental health services;
- Connection to long-term mentorship opportunities;
- Pathways to pursuing higher education;
- Workforce development programs;
- Expanded and priority access to housing vouchers for the most vulnerable; and
- Housing permanency programs that remain engaged to ensure life-long sustainability.

An integral component of this commitment to our City's most vulnerable is working hand-in-hand with the Commission on Human Rights to put an end to social service, education, employment, and workplace discrimination based on housing status so that homeless people, and those on the precipitous of homelessness, are truly supported and don't succumb to pioniont reality of our City's failures.

**Policing**

Being homeless is not a crime. Yet, instead of providing targeted support that addresses the roots of the problem, the City and State have increased the roles of NYPD and the MTA Police in its strategies to address homelessness in recent years. This expansion of police into the social services sector is outside of these agencies’ missions to enforce the law. As New York fundamentally re-evaluates what public safety means, law enforcement agencies should be removed from providing primary homeless services.

As such, our Office is in strong support of the Mayor’s recent decision to eliminate the NYPD’s Homeless Outreach Unit and shift homeless services responsibilities to the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). This Unit engaged in punitive tactics including sweeps of homelessness encampments, invasive mass surveillance, and unjust arrests and summons. It is critical that this transition away from this Unit does not simply move its personnel and functionality to DHS, but constitutes a fundamental end to the criminalization of homelessness and a commitment to providing targeted social services.

Importantly, New York City must also end the Subway Diversion Program, which deploys police officers to target homeless New Yorkers in the subway and coerce them off public transit with the threat of
summons. Not only does this program fail to account for the unacceptable conditions of City shelters that contribute to increased street homelessness, it creates a mandate for discriminatory policing against homeless people. This flies in the face of the Community Safety Act, which explicitly prohibits the police from using actual or perceived homelessness as a reason to profile and target someone.\footnote{legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=1444267&GUID=BCB20F20-50EF-4E9B-8919-C51E15182DBF} Our Office is in solidarity with the call from groups like human.nyc and Coalition for the Homeless to clear all summonses that have been issued under the program.\footnote{www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/state-of-the-homeless/} Further, in order to understand the full impact that this program has had, the NYPD must publish reports detailing the number of summonses issued to homeless individuals, broken down by key demographic information. Our Office is currently pursuing legislation that would mandate this reporting.

**Bill of Rights**

New York City needs a homeless bill of rights that will ensure that homeless individuals are notified that their civil and social rights are protected under the law. Currently, homeless rights legislation has been passed in Connecticut, Illinois, Rhode Island, and Puerto Rico. The bill of rights should include information on protections against segregation; granted privacy and property; voting rights and fair and equal access to shelter; social services; legal counsel; and quality education for the children who may be experiencing homeless. It should also include information on how homeless individuals can connect with an advocate if they feel as if their rights are being violated. The Department of Social Services and service contractors should be required to post the bill of rights in a clearly visible location in all their sites, and include in shelter residents’ intake packets upon their assignment to a shelter.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS: HOUSING EQUITY

(Budget requests in italics)

1. Boost Income-Targeted Affordability and Keep Tenants in Their Homes
   - Rent, Evictions, and Foreclosures
     - Cancel rent payments during pandemic- \textsuperscript{A2617} (Niou)
     - Rent freeze to prevent hikes during pandemic
     - Support for homeowners and small property owners
   - Rent Stabilization
     - Give HCR authority and staffing it needs to enforce Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act
     - Prevent no-cause evictions- \textsuperscript{S3082} (Salazar)
     - Repeal the Urstadt Law
   - Affordability Mechanisms
     - Rent subsidy for SCRIE and DRIE recipients to cap rent to 30% of their income- \textsuperscript{$250 \text{ million- City and State}$}
     - Mitchell-Lama- Protect existing stock from deterioration and privatization, increase stock by creating new Mitchell-Lama 2.0 developments, and provide new paths for rent-to-own
     - Ensure compliance with subsidy programs- inform tenants of their rights
     - Crackdown on mortgage discrimination- divest City funds from complicit banks
     - Eliminate housing discrimination in co-op sales- \textsuperscript{Intro. 822} (Public Advocate Williams) and \textsuperscript{Intro. 761} (Lander)

2. Ensure Equitable Development and Halt Displacement
   - Require racial impact study for all proposed rezonings- \textsuperscript{Intro. 1572} (Public Advocate Williams)
   - Overhaul Mandatory Inclusionary Housing- increase eligibility for those with low-incomes
   - Moratorium on rezonings and opposition to Industry City rezoning plan
   - Fund Basement Apartment Conversion Pilot Program \textsuperscript{($1.09 \text{ million- City}$)} and phase in citywide
   - Convert vacant spaces into 100% affordable housing citywide
   - Prioritize affordable housing preservation
   - Expand Community Land Trusts- \textsuperscript{Intro. 1977} (Rivera)
   - Restore the 40% cuts to HPD’s capital budget \textsuperscript{($583 \text{ million- City}$)}
3. Ensure Tenants Have the Housing Conditions They Deserve
   - Increased HPD staffing ($4.5 million-City)
   - HPD to pursue full penalties of violations
   - Worst Landlord Accountability legislative package- Intro 2121 (Public Advocate Williams), Intro. 2122 (Public Advocate Williams), Intro. 585 (Public Advocate Williams), and Intro. 810 (Public Advocate Williams)
   - Guidelines for landlords on pandemic-related cleaning- Intro. 1975 (Public Advocate Williams)
   - Mandate reconnections for utility services cut off before pandemic

4. Invest in NYCHA and Its Residents
   - Close federal HUD funding gap- Public Housing Emergency Response Act (Velázquez)
   - Expand the mortgage recording tax to include private equity financed real estate acquisitions and dedicate all funding toward public housing- (Epstein) / S7231 (Salazár)
   - Comprehensive inspection and remediations of mold, leaks, and lead- immediate investment ($2.5 billion- City and State)
   - Federal government to cover all healthcare costs associated with health conditions caused by NYCHA health hazards
   - Implement non-punitive mechanisms around ensuring quality of life- reform NYPD procedure No. 212-60
   - Pause the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program
   - Create NYCHA Tenant Task Force- Intro. 1709 (Public Advocate Williams)
5. Provide Real Support to New Yorkers Experiencing Homelessness

- Permanent Housing
  - Home Stability Support- A2278 (Hevesi) / S856 (Krueger)
  - CityFHEPS- increase cap on allowable rents, expand the number of vouchers, make New Yorkers who are homeless eligible ($304.2 million-City)
  - Housing First framework
  - Expand, don’t roll back, individualized hotel room program
- Shelters
  - Improve maintenance, supply, and safety
  - Implement best practices that can reduce the spread at shelters
  - TGNC-related improvements- TGNC-specific floors in shelters, designated priority status for rental assistance, access to necessary gender-affirming healthcare while in shelter
  - Increase Safe Haven capacity by 500 beds ($24 million-City)
- Access to supportive services
  - Address stigma
  - Prioritize programs that are truly accessible across lived experience
  - Work with Commission on Human Rights to end discrimination based on housing status
  - Upcoming Homeless Bill of Rights legislative package (Public Advocate Williams)
- Policing
  - Remove NYPD from homeless services- commit to eliminating the NYPD’s Homeless Outreach Unit
  - End the Subway Diversion Program
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
The problems our city faces in the infrastructure and environmental justice spheres are nothing short of immense. Expensive, yet insufficient transportation and utilities hinder the economic mobility of low-income New Yorkers. Our subways, bridges, and tunnels are stuck in the 20th century. Pollution worsens our health and quality of life. Climate change is already causing increased extreme weather events and even more severe impacts approach quickly on the horizon. And communities of more color consistently bear the heaviest burden of these failures.

These issues demand systemic solutions—it is clear that the time for piecemeal reforms has passed. While the goals set below are ambitious, they are also achievable and necessary for the future of our city. Let’s get to work. We need:

1. A fully modernized transportation system that prioritizes affordability, accessibility, safety, and equity;
2. Investments in transformational infrastructure projects such as municipalization of New York City’s electrical grid, the Gateway Tunnel, and universal broadband access; and
3. A Green New Deal that tackles climate change, centers racial justice, and creates thousands of jobs.
1. CREATE A 21ST CENTURY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Transit Affordability and Policing

Transportation is a basic necessity that should not be denied to New Yorkers due to the inability to pay. As such, New York City must **begin working towards a free public transit system**. Through the expansion of the Fair Fares program, which provides half-priced rides to New Yorkers who are below the federal poverty line, we can achieve this ambitious goal by 2030. The first step should be to make fares completely free for those who are currently eligible for Fair Fares, which can be done by doubling the estimated $100 million expenditure on the program in Fiscal Year 2022.\(^{144}\) Critically, funding must be directed towards a robust outreach effort to ensure all eligible New Yorkers have knowledge of the program and are able to take advantage of it. In addition, the program must end its exclusion of Access-A-Ride users, which presents a serious challenge to transit affordability for low-income New Yorkers with disabilities. Over the course of the decade, we must phase-in universality for the program by continuously raising its eligibility cap, which is currently the federal poverty line—$12,760 for single individuals.

The issue of transit affordability is deeply intertwined with criminal justice, as the NYPD and MTA Police currently choose to address fare evasion through arrests and summonses. The City and State should **end this punitive approach to fare evasion**. It does not make public transportation safer—it simply criminalizes low-income New Yorkers and results in unnecessary and costly involvement with the justice system. Further, NYPD data shows that fare evasion enforcement is disproportionately implemented in communities of more color, and that Black and Latinx New Yorkers are more likely than their counterparts to be arrested, rather than issued a summons, for skipping the fare.\(^{145}\) Expanding Fair Fares to cover 100% of fare costs for the lowest income New Yorkers is a much more equitable and efficient solution to reducing fare evasion.

\(^{144}\) comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/comments-on-new-york-citys-fiscal-year-2021-adopted-budget/

It is extremely concerning that the MTA has opted to double-down on its punitive approach by hiring 500 new MTA Police Officers to police fare evasion and homelessness at a price tag of at least $249 million over four years. The MTA should halt this police hiring wave and redirect these funds toward improving affordability and service as well as increasing the presence of civilian MTA staff throughout stations.

Concern around these hires is exacerbated by the fact that MTA police officers are not currently required to wear body-worn cameras during their shifts, unlike NYPD officers. The absence of this basic law enforcement tool presents a barrier to transparency and accountability to the public. In order to rectify this issue, the State must pass A1552 (Reyes), which would mandate that MTA police officers operate these cameras while on duty. This Office carries Res. 1237 in support of this bill in the City Council.

In addition, our Office supports ending the Subway Diversion Program, which deploys police officers to target New Yorkers who are homeless in the subway and coerce them off public transit with the threat of summonses. Please see the Housing Equity section of this report for a breakdown of our plans regarding how to best support these New Yorkers.
Subway Service, Upgrades, and Expansions

The New York City subway and bus systems are integral to the functionality of our City. Quite simply, without them operating at full capacity, our economy will not be able to sustain. It is critical that the MTA receives the federal funding that it needs in order to cover revenue losses caused by the pandemic-related dropoff in ridership. If the federal government fails to provide this critical support, the MTA will not be able to maintain basic levels of service, let alone address the long overdue improvements laid out below.

It is imperative that the MTA immediately restores 24/7 service, which many late-night workers and businesses depend on. As trains are still running overnight and the MTA has not saved any money through this reduction in service, it is clear that subway schedules must return to normal.\footnote{comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/service-denied-accessibility-and-the-new-york-city-subway-system/}

In addition, MTA must make ensuring accessibility one its foremost priorities. It is shameful that only 24% of New York City subway stations are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).\footnote{www.mta.info/press-release/mta-headquarters/mta-announces-20-additional-subway-stations-receive-accessibility} A major barrier to ADA compliance is the lack of elevators and ramps in stations, which makes access impossible for folks who use wheelchairs. Making matters worse, a report from Manhattan Borough President Brewer demonstrates that a majority of these stations deemed accessible are in need of immediate infrastructure improvements related to accessibility. The MTA must be held accountable to its current plan to spend $5.2 Billion over the next four years to make accessibility improvements to 70 subway stations.\footnote{www.mta.info/press-release/mta-headquarters/mta-announces-20-additional-subway-stations-receive-accessibility} The same holds true for their long term goals of 50% ADA compliance by 2029 and “maximum possible system-wide accessibility” by 2034, which are necessary floors for improvements.\footnote{new.mta.info/sites/default/files/2019-09/MTA%202020-2024%20Capital%20Program%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf} These infrastructural projects must happen simultaneously with enhancements to the Access-A-Ride system. In this aim, the State should establish the On-Demand pilot as a permanent citywide program by passing S4037 (Comrie).

Hygiene also needs to be prioritized, especially given the current presence and potential re-emergence of COVID-19. It is encouraging that the MTA has been cleaning subways nightly. However, moving forward, two crucial improvements must be incorporated into these efforts. First, the MTA must improve the labor conditions of the sanitation workers who are carrying out this essential work. City law mandates that

\footnote{comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-to-mta-subway-cleaners-are-owed-prevailing-wage/}
these workers receive a prevailing wage of at least $27 per hour,\textsuperscript{150} yet reports that some of these workers are receiving as little as $18 per hour.\textsuperscript{151} This amounts to systematic wage theft and must end. In addition, many of these workers are not receiving healthcare or even proper personal protective equipment through their employer, which is egregious given the health risks they are taking on through their work. This must be rectified immediately.

The MTA must also take real steps to improve subway safety, as numerous people die each year by falling onto the tracks. An important improvement in this aim is implementing screen doors separating the platform from the tracks. The MTA had previously announced a $30 million pilot that would roll out a program doing this, but indefinitely postponed it in 2018.\textsuperscript{152} This pilot should be reinstated and then expanded, if successful. These barriers will save lives, and also significantly reduce trash on the tracks and reduce delays from track fires and train collisions.

Lastly and critically, the MTA needs to create new service options for New Yorkers living in transit deserts, which are neighborhoods where residents are more than a fifteen minute walk from the nearest subway station. A 2015 Harvard study shows that short commuting time is the single strongest factor correlated with upward economic mobility for low income families, emphasizing the economic importance of addressing this issue.\textsuperscript{153} The expansion of the subway system must be a centerpiece of the MTA’s solution here. As we look forward to infrastructure planning in the coming decades, lines must be extended into Southeast Brooklyn, Southeast Queens, Northeast Queens, Northwest Bronx, and Hunt’s Point. In addition, bus service must be improved through the implementation of bus-only lanes that mimics the successful 14th Street busway in Manhattan. Doing so will drastically increase travel time on buses and also decrease congestion and pollution.

There are a number of improvements that our public transportation system needs. However, these cannot occur if the MTA does not make a number of organizational reforms that address inefficiency, waste, and a lack of accountability. These include improving contracting processes, controlling construction costs, streamlining cooperation with other governmental agencies and utilities, creating a MTA environmental health and safety bureau, and increasing City oversight and decision-making. With these reforms put into place as well as the additional funding streams laid out in the Education & Opportunity section of this report, the MTA will be better equipped to implement the above infrastructural improvements.

\textsuperscript{150} comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-to-mta-subway-cleaners-are-owed-prevailing-wage/
\textsuperscript{152} www.wsj.com/articles/mta-postpones-platform-safety-pilot-program-1530033174
\textsuperscript{153} www.equality-of-opportunity.org/images/nbhd_exec_summary.pdf
**Pedestrians**

In order to reduce pollution and carbon emissions and improve safety and quality of life, New York City must implement policies that limit car congestion and create a more pedestrian-friendly landscape in our streets. A tentpole of these efforts must be an expeditious and efficient rollout of the congestion pricing plan that was approved by the State in 2019. The federal government must cease its administrative delays of this critical program, which will reduce the gridlock plaguing the City and raise critical funds for MTA capital plans.\(^{154}\)

In addition, the City should improve and expand its Open Streets program, which has provided spaces for New Yorkers to enjoy the City landscape while socially distancing and increased foot traffic for local businesses. First, as Transportation Alternatives has argued, these programs should be run by local community organizations in partnership with the Department of Transportation (DOT).\(^ {155}\) Currently the NYPD manages the majority of these spaces, which is outside the scope of what their work should entail.\(^ {156}\) Second, it is crucial for pedestrian safety that the Department of Transportation ensures that drivers are not able to violate the rules of Open Streets zones and those who do are held accountable with fines. Third, residents of communities of color and lower-income communities must be also able to benefit from this program, which has unacceptably been concentrated in whiter and wealthier neighborhoods.\(^ {157}\) Fourth, these Open Streets sites should be connected to one another to form and network and run year-round, functioning similarly to the pedestrian “superblocks” that cities in Spain have begun to implement.\(^ {158}\)

Lastly, the NYPD must **cease barricading streets that are adjacent to police precincts**. This practice robs pedestrians of space that should be open to the public, reduces foot traffic for local businesses, and creates an antagonistic atmosphere in regards to police-community relations.

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\(^{155}\) [www.transalt.org/open-streets-progress-report/#shortcomings](http://www.transalt.org/open-streets-progress-report/#shortcomings)

\(^{156}\) Ibid.

\(^{157}\) [nyc.streetsblog.org/2020/05/21/mayors-open-streets-leave-out-neighborhoods-that-need-it-most/](http://nyc.streetsblog.org/2020/05/21/mayors-open-streets-leave-out-neighborhoods-that-need-it-most/)

Alternative Transportation

In order to improve safety, health and environmental efforts, and commute times, New York City must implement bicycle-friendly infrastructure. Given that 29 cyclists were killed in the City in 2019, this must occur expeditiously. One key way to do this is to dramatically expand protected bike lanes. Our Office is in support of the Five-Borough Bikeway plan laid out by the Regional Plan Association, which calls for an arterial network of protected lanes spanning 425 miles. In addition, the City must increase bicycle parking by installing new corrals and exploring implementing a network of bike parking modules, which are beginning to be tested in Brooklyn Navy Yard.

The citywide expansion of the Citi Bike bikeshare program, which is currently concentrated in Manhattan and surrounding neighborhoods, should also be a priority. The City should dedicate $75 million in public funds towards this effort in the upcoming budget. If expanded, the program could provide an important mobility option for more New Yorkers. Further, for the program to truly succeed, it must coincide with an expanded affordability program that grants free usage to New Yorkers who are eligible for Fair Fares, the creation of mechanisms that allow use of the service without a credit or debit card, the successful rollout of a robust e-bike fleet, and the implementation of bike lanes and other safety improvements.

As we look to develop cycling infrastructure, it is important that we dispel the myth that cycling is a mode of transportation used by predominantly white New Yorkers. Data shows us that Black, white, Latinx, and Asian New Yorkers cycle at similar rates. Further, the delivery workers who depend on bicycle infrastructure to do their jobs are predominantly Latinx and Asian. New Yorkers of all races would benefit from improved cycling conditions.

Further, our Office supports the City’s commuter van network, which plays a critical role in neighborhoods that are underserved by public transportation. However, too many operators are operating illegally, which threatens public safety. The City should use its enforcement powers to curb unauthorized van use and for all illicit operations to attain licensure through the Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC).

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161 academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3854&context=gc_etds
Lastly, the Office supports the expansion of the NYC Ferry network into additional areas, especially lower-income areas that have limited subway access. Additionally, ferry accessibility should be increased by allowing MetroCard and OMNY as fare payment options, and by granting free or discounted transfers to and from the bus and subway systems. However, the pricing structure of the ferry, which universally charges $2.75 per ride, is unsustainable. Currently, the City subsidizes each ferry ride by $9.34, which is more than twice the per-ride subsidy of buses and more than four times the per-ride subsidy of subways. This disproportionate subsidy is brought into further question by the fact that ferry ridership is predominantly made up of New Yorkers who are of above-average income, white, and non-commuters. While low-income New Yorkers and those who are using the ferry to commute to work should be able to ride the ferry at its current price, the fare should be raised to $6.50 for all other riders in order to better cover operating costs and free up funds for transit affordability programs including Fair Fares.

![New York City Government Subsidies for Transit](diagram.jpg)

Source: Partnership for New York City, 2018
Economic Development Corporation, 2019
Created by the Office of the New York City Public Advocate

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162 ny.curbed.com/2019/10/1/20893923/nyc-ferry-subsidies-benefit-wealthy-white-riders
For-Hire Vehicles

Taxi and rideshare drivers have been seriously impacted by decreases in ridership due to the pandemic, with 84% drop in total rides from March, 2020 to April, 2020. Through its GetFoodNYC program, which enlists drivers to deliver meals to schools and homes, the City has successfully supported this workforce and improved essential services. The City should expand this program to include more drivers as well as licensed commuter vans. It should also further expand on this program’s success by integrating drivers into more City programs including Access-A-Ride, which would allow for the implementation of a citywide on-demand e-hail program, which would drastically improve transportation for New Yorkers with disabilities. Additional potential avenues include medicine delivery and transportation of essential workers working late-night shifts who cannot access adequate bus travel during the current moratorium of overnight subway service.

Taxi drivers have seriously suffered due to the City’s severe mismanagement of taxi medallions. The City was complicit in the artificial inflation of medallion prices and encouraged drivers to purchase these medallions using high-risk borrowing. When the medallion prices inevitably crashed, many drivers were left in substantial debt, which has led to at least 950 drivers filing for bankruptcy and is likely to have played a role in the current suicide crisis affecting the industry. These drivers deserve financial relief through a comprehensive bailout that includes federal and city funding as well as forgiveness from financers.

Rideshare drivers have lacked fair compensation to their classification as independent contractors, which exempts their employers from providing benefits that are mandated for traditional employees such as health insurance. In order to rectify this, all drivers who work the hours of full-time or part-time employees must be classified as such. In addition, all rideshare drivers deserve the right to collectively bargain and form a union. The State should pass legislation that explicitly grants this right.

Traffic Enforcement

As our City works to improve public safety using non-police tools, the City must comprehensively re-evaluate how it addresses traffic enforcement. Currently, the City tasks the NYPD with this responsibility, which has inflated the Department’s budget and delivered less than ideal outcomes. In 2019, New York City tragically experienced 218 traffic fatalities, demonstrating that the City’s current approach is not

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165 [www.nytimes.com/2019/05/19/nyregion/taxi-medallions.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/19/nyregion/taxi-medallions.html)
working. Additionally, NYPD enforcement has shown to disproportionately target New Yorkers of more color. For example, despite making up about 53.4% of the City’s population, Black and Latinx New Yorkers received 89.5% of jaywalking tickets issued between January and September of 2019, and 86.4% of tickets related to biking on the sidewalk in 2018 and 2019.\textsuperscript{167} The NYPD has failed to report data broken down by race on automotive traffic stops\textsuperscript{167} and our Office is proud to co-sponsor Intro. 1671 (Adams), which would require them to do so.

In keeping with the vision of reimagining public safety the City should transfer traffic enforcement responsibilities from the NYPD to the DOT, which held these responsibilities until Mayor Giuliani shifted them to the NYPD in 1996. The 3,300 civilian Traffic Enforcement Agents (TEAs) could be integrated into the operations of the DOT in the next fiscal year. This transition should include discussions of wages increases and title changes for TEAs. DOT must also move away from centering punishment as a deterrence mechanism, and move towards one that focuses on implementing infrastructural improvements that we know improve safety. These include “traffic calming” infrastructure such as that raised speed limiters and lane narrowing, which reduce opportunities for illegal speeding and aggressive driving.\textsuperscript{168} They also include expanding the scope of red light, speed, and bus lane automated enforcement cameras, and introducing new pilots to automate enforcing moving and parking violations.\textsuperscript{169} These changes would create a more cost-efficient system that is more objective and limits police encounters.

It is paramount that reforms to tickets and fines is a part of this transition. New York City should follow the lead of Buffalo, New York, which recently instituted a progressive sliding scale for traffic violation fines.\textsuperscript{170} This measure creates equity by ensuring that low-income people won’t be paying substantial percentages of their wealth on fines and late fees. In this aim, the City Council should pass Intro. 1823 (Johnson). In addition, New York State should mimic Oregon in prohibiting courts from rescinding personal and commercial driving privileges as a consequence of being unable to pay traffic-related fines.\textsuperscript{171} Losing one’s ability to drive can have devastating economic consequences and make paying fines even more difficult.

\textsuperscript{167} nyc.streetsblog.org/2020/01/08/nypd-targets-blacks-and-latinos-for-jaywalking-tickets/?fbclid=IwAR3pR34KY2A8dtsa0CCalNucErdiA2Ho0LR6tfIV_R5vD2s-ysXDZtA2Q
\textsuperscript{168} www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/pedestrians/traffic-calming.shtml
\textsuperscript{169} static1.squarespace.com/static/5cab9d9b65a707a9b36f4b6c/t/5eeec1235fe73d720da412589/1592529462229/CaseForSelfEnforcingStreets.pdf
\textsuperscript{170} news.wbfo.org/post/mayor-brown-announces-initiatives-adjust-fines-and-fees-low-income-buffalo-residents
\textsuperscript{171} nbc16.com/news/local/oregon-legislature-bans-suspending-drivers-licenses-over-unpaid-traffic-fines
2. INVEST IN TRANSFORMATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

Energy

New York State residents currently pay some of the highest rates for electricity in the country, and rates will continue to rise over the next three years. Yet in return, New York receives insufficient service from its nearly sole provider, Con Edison. Lengthy blackouts continuously plague residents, creating severe fiscal and health impacts, and Con Edison fails to communicate adequately with both the public and Government. The root cause of this problem is the very structure of the utility. Con Edison is a private company that has a monopoly over electricity in the City and lacks any accountability to New Yorkers. It does, however, have fiscal accountability to its stakeholders, to whom they distributed $912 million in 2019 in the midst of increased rates and declining service.

The solution to this problem is to make electricity a public utility owned by New York City. Our Office’s report, Municipalizing New York City’s Electric Grid, lays out a two-pronged approach to achieving public power, rooted in the generation and the transmission of energy. It calls for the expansion of the existing New York Power Authority (NYPA), which is publicly owned, to provide lower-cost energy generation. It also outlines a process for acquiring the electrical grid in New York City, currently operated by Con Edison, for transmission and distribution of that power. This process would require both city and state action and take several years, but it is a long overdue step to bringing electricity rates down and improving service to New Yorkers.

In the immediate term, Con Edison must be held fiscally accountable for the impact of the blackouts that they have overseen. In this aim, the State should pass S8879 (Carlucci), which would require utilities to reimburse customers for the cost of spoiled food or medication in cases of sustained power outages.

It is also critical that the City reduces reliance on natural gas in order to reduce carbon emissions, fight climate change, and improve the health of our communities. Electrification, the process of substituting electricity for gas as an energy source across a variety of applications, must be central to these efforts. In order for this to occur, we must increase the electricity transmission capacity into New York City, while simultaneously reducing peak demand from commercial buildings by implementing best practices,

172 www.eia.gov/electricity/state/
175 campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1102557709761&ca=ccaf8cff-993e-4af6-a5e1-d91f514002c6
176 www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/S8879
including the expeditious implementation of battery-based energy storage systems in consultation with the Fire Department. In addition, the City should facilitate the mass conversion of gas heating to electric means such as heat pumps through increased investment into the NYC Retrofit Accelerator program in the coming fiscal years.

Further, the City must rapidly expand **Community Solar** across the five boroughs, especially in lower-income neighborhoods. This program brings solar energy to those who have traditionally lacked access by allowing community members to collectively subscribe to solar arrays that are installed somewhere other than their own property. Doing so lowers household electricity costs for participants and reduces environmental impact and creates local jobs for the City in the process.

**Internet and Cable**

The increase of remote work and education has solidified the internet as an essential resource. As such, the City must work to **make internet access universal** by subsidizing and creating additional pathways to connectivity. In doing so, there must be a focus on closing the disparities in internet access that are most prevalent in the City’s communities of color.\(^{177}\) Our Office is encouraged by the Mayor’s recent decision to expedite the rollout of his Internet Masterplan to expand low-cost broadband access to 1.5 million New Yorkers who currently lack it. As a part of this rollout, the City must join with internet providers to give **free broadband low-income families of public school students**. As stated in the Education & Opportunity section of this report, it is also absolutely critical that the City launches an all-hands-on-deck effort to immediately install Wi-Fi in all shelters that house youth.

In addition, the City must use existing innovative large-scale public services and connectivity resources to create the nation’s first major **city-wide free outdoor public network**. Through its Harlem Wi-Fi network, the City has created a successful template of public connectivity. The City should look to scale up this model across the five boroughs in order to meet this ambitious goal. As this program is built out, the City should focus on providing public wi-fi in accessible locations that address areas of highest need.

Parks WiFi availability should be expanded from its current presence in 80 parks to all 1,700 parks, playgrounds, and recreation facilities.\(^{178}\) In addition, the City should collaborate with existing private-sector partners to broaden connection capabilities to a one-mile radius around each park. Further, the City should expand


\(^{178}\) www.nycgovparks.org/facilities/wifi
its network of multilingual and ADA compliant LinkNYC kiosks throughout all areas of the City, as they are currently concentrated predominantly in Manhattan. The City should also reinstate the NYCHA Digital Van Program and extend access to every NYCHA residence. This program, which has been halted since the start of the pandemic, must include integrated mobile hand washing stations and best sanitation practices. The City should also partner with DHS and DYCD to establish a similar model for single adult, family, and youth shelters. It is also critical that data privacy is upheld through all public wi-fi initiatives.

Moving forward, the City should explore the possibility of a public internet option that could prioritize service over profits and bring internet costs down across the board.

Additionally, providers must be held accountable to their responsibilities to the City. In 2008, the City signed a contract with Verizon to make FiOS internet service available to all NYC households by 2014. Verizon has not upheld this contract as at least one-quarter of NYC households were unable to access the service by this date. Verizon must rectify this situation by providing full citywide access or by financially compensating the City accordingly.

Charter Spectrum has also failed the City as its sole cable provider. In the past year, rates have increased for all packages by $7.50, despite thousands of complaints in regards to lacking service. To make matters worse, they have failed to provide their workers with adequate healthcare and engaged in union-busting behavior when workers decided to use their right to collectively bargain for fair compensation. It is clear that this company does not deserve an exclusive franchise in New York City.

*Construction*

New York City’s physical infrastructure is in dire need of improvement. In addition to the subway repairs and expansions referenced above, we must address our bridges and tunnels, which are not up to 21st century standards. Our Office strongly supports the Gateway program, which would build two new Hudson River tunnels, doubling current rail capacity and remedying damage from Hurricane Sandy. The Federal Government should assist in financing this critical project, which would jumpstart the tri-state economy. The Office additionally supports strengthening our inter-borough connectors in ways that will

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reduce gridlock, increase bicycle access, and ensure long-term resilience. Further, as explained in the Housing Equity section of this report, the City must dramatically increase its affordable housing stock. These projects can function as critical economic drivers that create jobs for New Yorkers.

We must ensure that these projects function as high-quality job creators for New Yorkers. In order to do so, the City must implement construction safety measures in accordance with Local Law 196 that guarantee that all workers are equipped with the skills and training necessary to carry out their responsibilities. 58 construction workers died on the job in 2018 in New York State, which is 58 too many—we must bring this number down to zero.\textsuperscript{183} As Latinx workers make up a disproportionate percentage of these deaths, we must empower Latinx community based organizations with industry experience and cultural competence to carry out worker trainings in order to maximize their efficacy.\textsuperscript{184} In addition, the City must draw a hard line and cease contracting with any construction firms who have facilitated unsafe working conditions that lead to worker deaths. Further, given that essential construction has resumed, it is important that in-person site safety training for these workers is immediately authorized.

**Food**

It is clear that lower-income neighborhoods of color have the highest rates of COVID-related deaths in the City. One of the key reasons for this is likely a higher concentration of health conditions that exacerbate the impact of the virus.\textsuperscript{185} These tragic outcomes emphasize the importance of addressing inequities in health by eliminating food deserts and swamps by increasing access to food that is healthy and affordable. Our Office strongly supports the Growing Food Equity in New York City agenda that the City Council has proposed in this regard.\textsuperscript{186} The agenda calls for strengthening the City’s urban agriculture infrastructure, incentivizing supermarkets presence in areas of high needs, and expanding successful programs like the Healthy Bucks program and nutritional programs in schools.\textsuperscript{187} On the federal level, we must expand SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) by increasing benefits by at least 25%, raising the income eligibility cap, and ending the public charge rule so that more immigrant families can take advantage of these programs.

\textsuperscript{183} nycosh.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020-Deadly-Skyline-Report.pdf
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{185} www.nytimes.com/2020/08/14/health/covid-19-obesity.html
\textsuperscript{186} council.nyc.gov/data/food-equity/
Further, the City has a moral obligation to ensure that no resident goes hungry. In order to do so, it should continue the successful Grab-and-Go, Meal Hub, and GetFoodNYC initiatives that have provided free meals to New Yorkers through public schools and home deliveries, respectively, throughout the duration of the pandemic and once it concludes. Further, the City must improve the accessibility of all food provision programs by equipping these programs with culturally competent meals including halal, kosher, and allergy-friendly options. In anticipation of a second wave of the pandemic, the City should also prepare for a potential food supply chain interruption by strengthening its food production capacity. Throughout these efforts, Community Based Organizations should be utilized and adequately funded by the City. Additionally, the City should look to partner with local street vendors, food trucks, and farmers markets and utilize them as food distribution hubs.

**Parks**

The pandemic has underscored how important parks are to the health and wellbeing of New York City communities. However, despite their increased usage since the implementation of social distancing protocols, the most recent City budget cut Parks funding by over 14%. These cuts have resulted in reports of lack of maintenance, including overflowing trash, overgrown grass, and faulty equipment. The City must restore $103.8 million in funding to the Parks budget in order to ensure that public greenspaces remain safe and enjoyable spaces for outdoor recreation during the pandemic and beyond. When determining spending priorities it is important that the City addresses inequities in park distribution by creating new parks and upgrading existing ones in lower income neighborhoods, as these neighborhoods have less access to greenspaces than their wealthier counterparts.

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188  www.newsweek.com/nyc-budget-cuts-parks-department-new-york-city-council-mayor-de-blasio-1515160
190  www.nytimes.com/2020/07/15/nyregion/nyc-parks-access-governors-island.html
3. IMPLEMENT A GREEN NEW DEAL IN NEW YORK CITY

Greenhouse gas emissions are the primary cause of climate change, which in turn creates severe impacts on New York City neighborhoods, predominantly those of more color. These include extreme weather events, severe heat waves, and displacement due to rising sea levels. Emissions also cause immediate health impacts including increased risks of lung cancer, heart disease, and asthma. 22% of Black children in NYC have asthma, compared to only 4% of white children—which illustrates air pollution’s racialized impact.\(^{191}\)

The City must comprehensively **address building emissions**, which make up about 70% of total emissions in the City.\(^{192}\) In order to do so, we must follow through on the significant emissions caps for large buildings set by the 2019 Climate Mobilization Act. However, we must also set requirements for smaller buildings, which were exempted from the Act, and provide interest-free loans, technical assistance, and other support to affected building owners in order to cover associated costs. The citywide expansion of the Community Retrofit NYC program, which supports energy and water use upgrades in multifamily buildings in Central Brooklyn and Southern Queens, is also important in this regard.

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\(^{191}\) wherewelive.cityofnewyork.us/explore-data/access-to-opportunity/health/

\(^{192}\) www.nyeefa.org/climate-mobilization-act/
We must also reduce our emissions in the transportation sector, which is the second largest source of emissions. As gasoline combustion from cars is by far the greatest contributor, it is critical that we reduce the City’s dependence on cars by adopting policies and constructing infrastructure that strengthen public transportation including those laid out in the transportation subsection above.

As the City and State reduce our dependence on greenhouse gas, we must use the transition to alternative energy as an economic opportunity. Our Office applauds the State’s recent decision to award Sunset Park Marine Terminal the wind turbine assembly plant project. This is an unmatched opportunity for the revitalization of the industrial waterfront with thousands of prevailing-wage jobs in green energy manufacturing, installation, operations, and maintenance. In doing so, it actualizes the principles of a Green New Deal: climate justice, job creation, and sustainability. The State should move forward with this critical community-driven project. Projects like this should serve as a model for initiatives moving forward.

New York City has a combined sewer system, in which sewage and stormwater travel through the same drainage infrastructure to reach wastewater treatment plants. When it rains significantly, the capacity of the treatment plants becomes overwhelmed, causing stormwater that has been mixed with sewage to flow into New York City’s waterways. Currently 11 billion gallons of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) enter the City’s open waters each year. This pollution has health impacts on nearby communities, damages aquatic ecosystems, and limits usability for recreation as well as the economic potential of waterside neighborhoods. The Department of Environmental Protection’s long-term control plans to reduce CWOs are wholly insufficient—aiming for a less than 3% decrease in CSOs over 10 years. Our Office supports the SWIM coalition in demanding a comprehensive CSO strategy that will make our rivers, bays, and creeks swimmable and fishable in the coming years. This must include the expansion of wastewater treatment capacity as well as the strategic use of CSO retention and green infrastructure to mitigate peak flow.

With the Rikers Island jail facilities slated to close in the coming years, the City must transform this land into a site that truly serves the public. I applaud the Council for passing the Renewable Rikers legislative package, Intros. 1592, and 1593 (Constantinides), which will transfer Rikers Island from the Department

193 nyc-ghg-inventory.cusp.nyu.edu/
194 Ibid.
195 www.thecity.nyc/2021/1/17/22236287/brooklyn-wind-turbine-assembly-hub
196 portal.nyserda.ny.gov/servlet/servlet.FileDownload?file=00Pt000000OPfCVEA1
197 portal.nyserda.ny.gov/servlet/servlet.FileDownload?file=00Pt000000OPfCVEA1
198 www.nrdc.org/experts/larry-levine/nycs-new-plan-would-let-massive-sewage-overflows-continue
of Corrections to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services. This allows the City to explore new purposes for this land including renewable energy generation, which could reduce pollution in lower-income communities of color and create jobs for New Yorkers who previously served time on Rikers.

Exposure to lead can cause severe health consequences including irreversible developmental damage in children, as well as brain and kidney damage. **New York City must end lead poisoning** once and for all. As lead service pipes are one of the primary sources of lead poisoning, and safer alternatives are readily available, we should work to eradicate their presence from New York completely. There are an estimated 360,000 lead pipes statewide.\(^{199}\) This process must begin by proactively targeting buildings with lead pipes that are most likely to have increased lead levels in their water—namely those that are older, smaller, and are in neighborhoods that have been found to have high rates through previous testing. While the government cannot compel building owners to replace lead pipes, the City should implement tax-based replacement incentives and increase owners’ disclosure requirements to their tenants and the State should fund replacements at-cost to building owners.

Further, despite children being most vulnerable to lead poisoning, the City has failed to comprehensively remove lead from school drinking water and to remove lead paint from school walls.\(^{200}\) It is critical that the DOE improve its lead identification and remediation procedures, as well as transparency to the public in this regard. Please see the Education and Opportunity section of this report for details around improving DOE infrastructure and raising funds for capital projects. In addition, NYCHA has also systematically failed to address lead paint in its facilities, which is of serious concern.\(^{201}\) Please see the Housing Equity section of this report for a more comprehensive breakdown of plans to remove health hazards, including lead, from NYCHA and all New York City homes.

Lastly, we must deal with **solid waste management**. Following over $100 million in cuts to the Department of Sanitation in the recent City budget, communities have seen a significant increase in garbage on their streets. Not only does this create a quality of life problem, it furthers rodent overpopulation and worsens air pollution, which subsequently affects respiratory health. These cuts must be reversed immediately and regular service must be restored.

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Of specific concern is the City’s failure in addressing organic wastes, like yard clippings and discarded vegetables, which makes up one-third of all solid wastes.\textsuperscript{202} Failing to implement sustainable organic waste management systems such as composting worsens trash overflows on the streets and creates environmental and health problems on the back end when the waste is incinerated or sent to landfills. Despite the clear need for composting, the City cut its composting funding by 90\% in the recent budget\textsuperscript{203} and is closing down successful composting sites, which has created job loss in the process.\textsuperscript{204} This funding, which creates long term savings due to its positive environmental impact, must be immediately restored. Further, the City Council should further organic waste diversion by passing \textit{Intro. 1942} (Powers) which would require each community district to have at least three organic waste sites. Moving forward, the City should look to mimic the Seattle legislation that implemented mandatory composting and has successfully reduced waste generation and created jobs.\textsuperscript{205}

All of the projects listed above across transportation, infrastructure, and environmental protection have significant labor needs, creating an opportunity for a major expansion of well-paying unionized public sector jobs. As referenced in the Education and Opportunity section of this report, we must strengthen our workforce development initiatives so that New Yorkers of more color have access to these positions, and increase labor rights to ensure that these jobs are of high quality. On the federal level, our Office strongly supports the Green New Deal, which was introduced as \textit{H.Res.109} (Ocasio-Cortez) / \textit{S.Res.59} (Markey) in the previous congressional session and provides a macro-level framework and funding stream for the initiatives in this report section.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS: INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (BUDGET REQUESTS IN ITALICS)

1. Create a 21st Century Transportation System
   - Affordability and policing
     • Free public transit by 2030 - scaling up Fair Fares
     • Double funding for Fair Fares this year ($100 million - City)
     • End overcriminalization of fare evasion
     • Halt MTA Police hiring wave
     • Require MTA Police to wear body cameras - A1552 (Reyes)
     • End Subway diversion program
   - Subway upgrades and expansions
     • 50% ADA accessibility by 2029 - follow through on 5.2 billion spending plan
     • Codify on demand Access-a-Ride - _____ (Comrie)
     • Restore 24/7 service
     • Better working conditions for sanitation workers - prevailing wage, PPE, healthcare
     • Subway safety-screen door pilot ($30 million - City and State)
     • New subway lines in transit deserts
     • Organizational reforms in MTA to increase efficiency
   - Pedestrians
     • Rollout congestion pricing immediately - cease federal administrative delays
     • Improve and expand Open Streets
     • Stop unnecessary NYPD barricades of public space
   - Alternative Transportation
     • 425 mile-long Five-Borough Bikeway
     • Citywide expansion of Citi Bike ($75 million - City)
     • Ensure safety of scooter-share and moped-share programs
     • Curb unauthorized commuter vans
     • Ferry - expand service, integrate into subway and bus transit, end excessive city subsidy by raising base fare
   - For-Hire Vehicles
     • Integrate taxi drivers into more City programs like Access-a-Ride
     • Comprehensive taxi medallion bailout
     • Benefits for all rideshare drivers - reclassification and portable benefits program
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

2. Invest in Transformative Infrastructure

   • Energy
     • Make electricity a public utility owned by New York City
     • Reduce reliance on natural gas- electrification
     • Expand community solar
   • Internet and Cable
     • Universal internet access- subsidizing connectivity for low income residents
     • Citywide free outdoor public network
     • Expand free internet at Parks, NYCHA residences, and shelters
     • Hold Verizon and Charter/Spectrum accountable
   • Construction
     • Invest in bridges and tunnels
     • Construction safety- ensure efficacy of trainings
   • Food
     • Increase access to healthy and affordable food- Growing Food Equity agenda
     • Prevent hunger- continuation of Grab-and-Go, Meal Hub, and GetFoodNYC programs throughout the pandemic and onwards
     • Culturally competent meals
   • Parks
     • Restore funding cuts ($103.8 million)
     • New parks and upgrades in lower income communities

3. Implement a Green New Deal in New York City

   • Reduce building emissions- set requirements for smaller buildings and subsidize costs
   • Reduce transportation emissions- reduce dependency on cars
   • Comprehensive CSO strategy- expand wastewater treatment capacity, strategic use of CSO retention, goal of swimmable and fishable rivers
   • Renewable Rikers package- Intros 1591, 1592, and 1593 (Constantinides)
   • End lead poisoning- eradication of lead pipes, remove lead from school drinking water and walls
   • Green New Deal- 2019-2020’s H.Res.109 (Ocasio-Cortez) / S.Res.59 (Markey)
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: CIVIC & COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT
1. IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

New York City’s immigrant communities are integral to our social fabric, our economy, and our overall well-being. In the wake of unprecedented attacks from the previous Presidential Administration, the City must do all that it can to limit the impact of xenophobic policymaking on a federal level and take proactive measures on a municipal level to help lift up immigrants, especially those who have been impacted by the pandemic and those who are vulnerable due to citizenship status. President Biden must immediately repeal the policies of his predecessor and prioritize implementing a transformational immigrant rights agenda that affirms the dignity of all Americans living in this country.

Immigration Enforcement

New York City is a sanctuary city that has no need for the presence of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Unfortunately, the Trump Administration sought to retaliate against the City’s protection of our immigrant community by ramping up ICE activities. Last year, ICE launched its Operation Palladium campaign, which has included the deployment of heavily militarized Border Patrol Tactical (BORTAC) Units to the City for enforcement purposes and around-the-clock surveillance of immigrant New Yorkers at their homes and workplaces.206 Certain components of legislation proposed by the Biden Administration that include increasing spending on immigration enforcement technology and infrastructure are deeply concerning.207 At a time the immigrant community is reeling from the injustices of the Trump administration and all Americans families suffering from the health and economic impacts of COVID-19, we cannot divert critical funds to increased enforcement and militarization. On the federal level, the government should abolish ICE and put a moratorium on immigration enforcement actions in New York City.

Further, those held in civil ICE detention should be immediately released. Civil ICE detention has long been a cruel and unnecessary measure that has impacted many immigrant New Yorkers and their loved ones. The inhumane conditions that have plagued these facilities for years have been made even worse by the COVID-19 crisis. Detainees at Bergen County Jail, Hudson County Jail, and Elizabeth Detention

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206 www.nytimes.com/2020/03/05/us/ICE-BORTAC-sanctuary-cities.html
Center—all of which hold New York City residents detained by ICE—have tested positive for COVID-19. Urgent action must be taken in order to ensure the wellbeing of those being held in these facilities, including ensuring their prioritization for vaccine distribution. Additionally, all non-detainee immigration court proceedings should be halted for the length of the pandemic.

Our Office applauded President Biden’s recent decision to implement a 100 day moratorium on deportations. This action should be strengthened by eliminating a carveout that allows for ICE to override individual cases. We must ensure that immediate deportation relief is afforded to all New Yorkers.

On the State and City level, we must take targeted legislative and administrative action to stop ICE to the greatest extent possible. In this aim, the City must take action to halt ICE enforcement in and around hospitals. In February of last year, ICE agents arrested Gaspar Avendano-Hernandez at Maimonides Medical Center after tasing him and shooting his partner’s son in the face outside of their own home. Incidents of this kind create an atmosphere of fear that dissuade immigrants from seeking the care that they need. This creates a serious public health problem in the midst of the pandemic, as if New Yorkers who are symptomatic avoid going to hospitals due to a fear of immigration enforcement, it puts their health and that of the public at risk. New York City public and private hospitals must commit to turning away ICE agents if they enter their facilities and develop systematic processes for doing so.

It is also critical that the NYPD cease all collaborations with ICE. It is greatly concerning that the NYPD has confirmed that ICE agents provided security for police precincts during protests following the murder of George Floyd. This collaboration occurred in violation of New York City’s status as a Sanctuary City without any transparency to the public or the City Council. The NYPD has also supported ICE in deportation operations including the attempted deportation of Ravi Ragbir. These actions must be investigated fully by the Office of the Inspector General and the New York State Attorney General, and those responsible must be held accountable. Additional oversight measures must be put in place to ensure that the NYPD does not repeat rogue collaborations of this sort again.

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209 documentedny.com/2020/06/10/nypd-says-ice-hsi-agents-protecting-precincts/
The State must also take action to restrict data sharing between the State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and ICE. Prior to April of this year, the Driver's License Access and Privacy Act (commonly known as the Green Light Law) allowed New Yorkers without citizenship to apply drivers licenses and prevented any data sharing between these two parties. However, through the state budgetary process, the legislature regrettably amended this law to allow for data sharing under narrow circumstances. While on paper these circumstances do not put Green Light participants at risk, the amended language in the bill does not specify a process by which the DMV will share individual-level data with ICE. Stringent measures must be immediately implemented to prevent overreach from ICE in order to ensure that the private information of vulnerable New Yorkers is not exposed. Moving forward, the State should reinstate the original language of the Green Light Law.

Residency Status

Our Office strongly supports the Biden Administration’s legislative proposal to extend immediate Green Card eligibility to DACA recipients, TPS holders, and immigrant farmworkers. However, Liberian-Americans who have been granted temporary status through the Deferred Enforced Departure program (DED) and U visa holders who have experienced abuse are excluded from this proposal—any introduced legislation must include these groups.

The Public Charge rule implemented by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) restricts the ability of immigrants who use certain government programs to get VISA extensions and permanent residency status. This is a xenophobic policy that was passed by the Trump Administration in the aim of reducing the access that immigrants and their families have to necessary supports, such as Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The pandemic’s disproportionate economic impact on the immigrant community has amplified the cruelty of this rule, and it is critical that the federal government abides by the recent federal court decision to halt the rule’s implementation during the current national emergency. The President must end this Rule immediately.

Since 2014, the City Council has funded the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP), which grants legal representation to New York City immigrants who are facing deportation and cannot afford an attorney on their own. This program has increased the success rate of immigrant defense cases by an incredible 1,100 percent.211 New York State must build off of this success by passing the Access to Representation Act (ARA),

211 www.vera.org/publications/new-york-immigrant-family-unity-project-evaluation
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: CIVIC & EMPOWERED COMMUNITY

A1961 (Cruz) / S81 (Holyman), which would codify the right to an attorney in deportation proceedings on a statewide level. Critically, unlike the current provisions of NYIFUP, this Act would apply universally, without carve outs for certain interactions with the criminal justice system. The Governor’s decision to cut $10 million in State funding for the Liberty Defense Project, which provides legal representation in deportation cases, emphasizes why this bill must be passed. In addition to passing the ARA, the Governor must restore this funding in the upcoming budget. The City should include funding to immediately end the “criminal carveout” in NYIFUP in its upcoming budget with a $4 million increase in spending.

Pandemic Relief

Undocumented New Yorkers and their families must be included in all recovery efforts extended by all levels of government. In the first three stimulus packages passed by Congress, they have been excluded, and it is critical that this is remedied in upcoming legislation. On the federal level, our Office supports monthly recurring $2,000 pandemic survival checks that are inclusive of all Americans regardless of citizenship status. On the City level, our Office supports a $500 cash grant program for persons who meet eligibility for the City's Fair Fares Program. This would include folks, regardless of citizenship status, and would generally target the lowest 20% of earners in NYC and cost the city an estimated $932.7 million. The City should also explore the temporary universal basic income plan proposed by Speaker Corey Johnson in March, 2020, which would not include any immigration status related carve outs.

In addition, the Office supports the $20 million dollar fund that the City has dedicated toward emergency financial relief for immigrants as an initial first step. However, this funding, which is currently coming exclusively from private philanthropy, does not come close to matching the need of the estimated 192,000 undocumented New Yorker City residents who have lost jobs during the pandemic. The City should create its own funding stream of $20 million for this initiative. On the state level, California has mitigated this issue by dedicating a $75 million fund to support these workers, which is supplemented by $50 million in philanthropic contributions. New York should mimic this program with $75 million of State funding and engage with philanthropic partners to increase funding.

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213 council.nyc.gov/press/2020/03/19/1888/
Workers Rights and Small Businesses

Immigrant New Yorkers make up a disproportionately high percentage of the City’s essential workforce and are additionally more vulnerable to workplace exploitation. Immigrants also own 48 percent of New York City’s 220,000 small businesses, but have been largely disconnected from government support efforts. Please see the Education and Opportunity section of this report for a detailed list of proposals regarding the workforce and businesses, many of which directly target or would significantly affect immigrant New Yorkers. This includes our Office’s bill, Int. 1990, which would require the Department of Small Business Services to create an interest-free loan program for small businesses, non-profit organizations and freelance workers forced to close or operate at reduced capacity due to the pandemic.

Language Access

In education, business, civic processes, and healthcare, the City’s lack of language access resources presents a significant obstacle for the City’s immigrant community. It is critical that the city increases language resources across the board. Specific proposals are included throughout the body of this report.

2. VOTING

The right to vote is the bedrock of our democracy. New York City must break down its long-lasting barriers to voting, many of which disproportionately disenfranchise people of more color. In addition, we must reform our campaign systems to ensure that all New Yorkers are able to have their political voices heard equally.

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216 cmsny.org/new-york-essential-workers/
218 Language in this section taken from the Office of the Public Advocate’s Voting Rights Platform: http://files.constantcontact.com/1c58f85b001/57ea4b07-c824-4284-b9ed-b8201646b366.pdf
Reform the Board of Elections Contracting Process

Contracting has consequences. This fall, when the Board of Elections in the City of New York (BOE) sent out nearly 100,000 incorrect absentee ballots to Brooklyn voters, they took no accountability for this catastrophic error. Instead, they placed sole blame on the vendor they hired to send out their mail, Phoenix Graphics, through a no-bid contracting process. While it is critical that the BOE must hold Phoenix Graphics accountable by recovering the entire sum of their contract, it must also use this incident to jumpstart serious changes in how it contracts vendors. On the front end, transparent competitive bidding processes must be used. On the back end, there needs to be robust oversight and quality control mechanisms in place so that such errors sort never happen again.

In this regard, it is reassuring that the Board of Elections has listened to advocates and elected officials who have raised that the ExpressXL voting machines they had planned on purchasing have significant operational flaws that would compromise the integrity of our elections. However, the fact that such a clearly problematic purchase was even on the table raises significant concerns.

Implement Ranked Choice Voting Effectively

Ranked Choice Voting will change the way we elect leaders for the better, helping to make sure that all communities and all voters are better represented—voters knew this in 2019, when the vast majority elected to adopt the practice in New York City.

While many unfounded arguments against this system have been raised, there are credible concerns about funding for proper implementation. It is critical that the City carries out a robust and culturally competent public education effort that ensures voters have all the information they need to cast a ballot effectively. This outreach must occur in languages that match the diversity of New York City communities. Our office will work to hold all responsible to account so that the necessary work is done by city agencies and community based organizations, and will be actively engaged in reaching New Yorkers in advance of the upcoming special elections.

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220 Ibid.
Ranked Choice Voting is as important a democratic reform now as it was when New Yorkers overwhelmingly voted to implement it over a year ago, and the city has an obligation to fulfill the will of the voters and ensure that this new form of voting is put in place in a way that is clear to voters and operationally sound.

**Improve Vote-By-Mail**

Voting by mail can be, and must be, made more efficient. First, the State should implement a “No-Excuse” vote-by-mail system, which would allow all voters to request an absentee ballot without needing to provide a rationale. Second, the State must pay for and provide pre-paid postage on all absentee ballots so that no ballot can be rejected for lacking stamps—these rejections function as a poll tax. Comprehensive coordination with the United States Post Office must occur to ensure that all ballots sent out by voters are received by the BOE and counted. And third, the BOE must be able to deliver accurate election results to the public in a significantly more timely fashion. In order to facilitate speedier returns, absentee ballots should be validated and canvassed upon receipt. Further, the Governor must provide a minimum of $7.5 million in funding needed to cover expenses for necessary staff and infrastructure to ensure the Board can certify results promptly this year.

**Improve In Person-Voting and Staffing**

In elections held this year, New York City voters experienced difficulties including hours-long lines, poll sites opening late, and poll workers handing out incomplete ballots. While the complications of the COVID-19 pandemic raised understandable challenges, these could have been mitigated with better planning, staffing, and funding. The BOE must ensure that the number of ballot-on-demand printers at polling sites meets the need of each district’s population. Additionally, it is unacceptable that New York City has less polling sites per capita than nearly all comparable cities in the country. The BOE must require all centers and institutions that receive taxpayer funding to be poll sites in order to create a better distribution of voters at poll sites across the city and shorter wait times.

**Increase Voting Accessibility**

The integrity of our elections depends on the ability of all eligible New Yorkers to cast a ballot. The BOE must make improvements regarding accessibility for New Yorkers with disabilities. These include
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: CIVIC & EMPOWERED COMMUNITY

developing fail-safe mechanisms for private and efficient absentee voting for those with vision and motor related disabilities, as well as implementing better in-person accommodations, including functional, ADA compliant, accessible entrances and voting machines. The BOE should strengthen early voting by allowing voters to cast ballots at any early voting site in their borough. Additionally, the number of early voting locations should be dramatically increased— I urge the state to pass S1039 (Krueger) and S557 (May) in this aim. Further, the BOE must also implement the rules established by the Civic Engagement Commission in relation to language accessibility. Previous efforts that the Board has made to limit access to translators must cease.²²³

New York State must follow the lead of 21 other states and allow for same-day voter registration, which has been shown to drastically increase voter turnout. Our Office is supportive of S517 (Gianaris) / A502 (Carroll) which if passed again this upcoming legislative session, would trigger a public ballot measure on this critical issue.

Ensure the Right to Vote for Incarcerated New Yorkers

The right to vote should not be determined by one’s involvement with a criminal justice system that we know impacts New Yorkers of more color in a disproportionate and discriminant way. New York State should join Washington, D.C., Maine, and Vermont in ending the disenfranchisement of incarcerated people by passing A699 (Rozic). Our Office has introduced Res. 1236 in support of this legislation in the City Council. Additionally, the disenfranchisement of New Yorkers on parole, who currently require a conditional voting rights pardon from the Governor in order to vote, must end. A bill doing so was introduced last legislative session as A5367 (O’Donnell)/ S1931 (Comrie). The City should also expand the voting infrastructure in its jails so that people held in pretrial detention are able to exercise their right to vote. Our Office is additionally pursuing legislation to improve data collection and coordination between agencies to ensure all eligible New Yorkers, including those who are incarcerated, have the right and access to voting.

Ensure the Right to Vote in Municipal Elections for Immigrant New Yorkers

Immigrant New Yorkers shape the City’s economy and culture, but many are locked out of our electoral processes. Our Office is a co-sponsor of the Our City, Our Vote bill, Int. 1867 (Rodríguez), which would restore the right of non-citizen New Yorkers who have Green Cards and work authorizations to vote in municipal elections. The opportunity to vote for their elected leaders will lead to greater civic engagement, more accountability and opportunity, and a more just and safe recovery for New York City. There is a strong precedent for such action, as these New Yorkers were previously able to vote in School Board elections from 1969 to the dissolution of the School Board system in 2002.²²⁴

²²⁴ www.ccny.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/psm/upload/NonCitizenFinal.pdf
Protect the Rights of Non-Major Political Parties

The voices of those who feel that the Democratic and Republican Parties do not represent their interests should not be silenced in elections. In a transparent political maneuver, Governor Cuomo and other State leaders recently increased the vote threshold needed for a party to maintain automatic ballot status by 160% and increased the threshold for qualifying for a ballot line via petitions by 200%. The original thresholds must be restored. It is also critical that New York maintains fusion voting, which allows candidates to run on multiple party lines and accumulate their vote totals.

Restructure the BOE

Positions at the BOE should be based on qualifications, not connections. Yet under the current system, Democratic and Republican county party leaders, who are unelected and unaccountable to the public, pick the commissioners who run local Boards. This results in the Boards’ leadership being filled with patronage hires, rather than experts who specialize in the unique skills needed to oversee elections. In order to rebuild trust in our core democratic process, we need to end the practice of partisan appointments at the BOE. The Governor and the State Legislature must take action to restructure the BOE as an independent, non-partisan body that emphasizes professionalism above all else.

Institute New BOE Leadership

The BOE has failed New Yorkers election after election. While system-wide reforms are needed, as an immediate first step, New York must overhaul the current BOE leadership on both the City and State levels. In order to avoid repeating the same operational collapses over and over again, those who are responsible for them must be held accountable.

3. GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

The current pandemic and reckoning with systemic inequality has made it clear that the government needs to step up and implement legislative and administrative solutions that can address New York’s problems at their roots. In order to do so, governmental bodies need to improve internal practices that have functioned as roadblocks to progress for far too long.

**New York State**

The current State budgetary process disproportionately emphasizes the role of the Governor at the expense of the role of the State Legislature. The Governor constructs the initial budget, uses the process to make legislative changes, and can unilaterally reject any additions made by the Legislature. Our Office supports A1928 (Gottfried) / S820 (Biaggi), which would rectify this imbalance by amending the constitution to allow the Legislature to reduce, eliminate, or add new budget items and to override potential vetoes of said items by the Governor. It would also significantly increase government transparency to the public by requiring the Governor’s budget submission to clearly identify and separately state each legislative proposal in the budget.²²⁶

It is also important that the Governor does not overreach State authority into the City’s finances. New York City must maintain its fiscal autonomy and as such, the newly revived Financial Control Board cannot be used as a vehicle for the Governor to impose austerity measures on a municipal level.²²⁷

**New York City**

This same concentration of power in the executive branch also exists in the municipal budgetary process. Our Office supports a charter revision that would make the City Council a truly equal partner in this process.

New York City should also **improve its public hearings and meetings** by making them more impactful and accessible. Many interested members of the public are unable to attend these events due to childcare concerns, timing, and geographic location. In order to rectify this, folks should be able to attend and testify

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remotely, and childcare should be offered at these meetings, as it is in Ithaca, New York. Additionally, public comment sections of hearings are critical venues for New Yorkers to have their voices heard in governmental decision-making procedures, yet many of the agencies or electeds in question leave before this section begins. Relevant government representatives should be required to either be present themselves or have a staffer or surrogate present during public comments.

City agencies must also improve accessibility to its digital resources, which frequently lack features that New Yorkers with disabilities utilize. The City Council should pass this Office’s bill, Int. 1861, which would enhance accessibility requirements and require agencies to have a Digital Inclusion Officer on staff. These officers would:

- Review agency websites and public digital content for compliance with standards;
- Develop agency policies to ensure compliance;
- Conduct periodic training for relevant agency staff on digital inclusion and website accessibility;
- Document and respond to complaints related to digital inclusion; and
- Provide analysis and recommendations to the head of agency and Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities to resolve related issues.

**New York City Council**

In order to ensure that favoritism does not impact prime sponsorship of legislation, City Council members are rightly assigned prime sponsorship on a bill based on which member first submitted the legislative request to the body. However, if a second member introduces a similar request to the body, there is no requirement for the first-in-time member to reveal their identity. Thus, some important legislative ideas are allowed to languish anonymously, which holds up movement on time-sensitive issues. In our legislative capacity, our Office has waived our anonymity in this process and instructed Council Staff to disclose our first-in-time status on a bill if another member submits a similar idea. We encourage current and future Council Members to do the same.

Lastly, City Council leadership must support the work of their staff by voluntarily recognizing all members of their union, including staffers who work directly for Council Members. Council staffers are integral to the City’s functions, and they deserve fair compensation, safe working conditions, and the right to collectively bargain. City Council has been instrumental in ensuring that New York is a union town and now it’s time to make sure this holds true within its own ranks.

228 nextcity.org/daily/entry/offering-childcare-at-city-meetings-may-be-key-to-diversifying-civic-engage
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: CIVIC & EMPOWERED COMMUNITY

CIVIC & COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT
(Budget requests in italics)

1. Immigrant Rights
   - Immigration Enforcement
     - Reject increased spending on immigration enforcement and technology
     - Abolish ICE
     - Release all people being held in civil ICE detention immediately
     - Halt ICE enforcement in and around hospitals
     - NYPD cease all collaborations with ICE
     - Restrict data sharing between DMV and ICE
     - Remove carve outs of Deportation Moratorium
   - Residency Status
     - End Public Charge Access to Representation Act (ARA), A1961 (Cruz) / S81 (Holyman)
     - Grant immediate Green Card eligibility to DED and U visa holders
     - Fully fund Liberty Defense Project ($10 million- State)
     - End criminal carveout of NYIFUP ($4 million- City)
   - Pandemic Relief
     - Include undocumented New Yorkers in all recovery efforts
     - Expand emergency financial relief for immigrants

2. Voting
   - Reform the Board of Elections contracting process
   - Implement Ranked Choice Voting effectively
   - Improve Vote-By-Mail- “no excuse” system, pre-paid postage, improve counting
   - Improve in person-voting and staffing- more polling sites, better resource distribution ($7.5 million- State)
   - Increase voting accessibility- remove barriers for New Yorkers with disabilities; more early voting sites- A S1039 (Krueger) and S6926A (May)
   - Ensure the right to vote for incarcerated New Yorkers A699 (Rozic), Res. 1236 (Public Advocate Williams); New Yorkers on parole 2019-2020’s A4937 (O’Donnell)/S1931; and those in pretrial detention
   - Municipal right to vote for immigrants- Our City, Our Vote, Int. 1867 (Rodríguez)
   - Protect the rights of non-major political parties- reinstate previous ballot status thresholds, maintain fusion voting
• Restructure the BOE as an independent, non-partisan body that emphasizes professionalism
• Institute new BOE Leadership- ED Michael Ryan must resign

3. Government Operations
• Allow the Legislature to reduce, eliminate, or add new budget items- A1928 (Gottfried) / S820 (Biaggi)
• Improve NYC public meetings- allow remote testimony, provide childcare, require presence of electeds or their staff during public testimony
• Improve accessibility of City digital resources- Intro. 1861 (Public Advocate)
• Streamline first-in-time process in City Council
• City Council to voluntarily recognize staff union
A RENEWED DEAL FOR NEW YORK CITY: JUSTICE, HEALTH EQUITY & SAFETY
1. TRANSFORMING POLICING

New Yorkers deserve a safe city. As written throughout this report, safety can be achieved on a macro-level by fostering a thriving economy and on a micro-level through targeted community based interventions. Our approach must be centered around redefining public safety to cover all components that make up personal and community well being. It is extremely encouraging that the City Council has adopted this framework in its recently announced legislative package that would remove the NYPD from some functions that are outside of their needed scope.

Naturally, policing also has a critical role to play by providing acute law enforcement solutions to criminal situations. However, the last year has shown us that the relationship between the NYPD and the communities they serve is continuing to fray. Data, personal experiences, and the words and actions of NYPD leadership have given New Yorkers valid reasons to question the current direction and approach of the Department. In order to carry out its law enforcement responsibilities effectively, the NYPD must dismantle the systemic injustices that have long plagued policing in this City by making the following transformations:

• Severely minimize use of force upon civilians;
• Create and implement real accountability for officers who discriminate against New Yorkers or use excessive force;
• Ensure use of technology does not further discrimination and over-surveillance; and
• Administer reallocation of funding from the NYPD to underfunded essential services that produce well being and public safety.

Minimize Use of Force

In June of this year, the City passed Int. No. 536-B (Lancman), a bill that made it a criminal offense for police officers to use procedures such as chokeholds that had already been banned by the NYPD’s patrol guide for more than two decades. This bill was a critical part of the City’s response to the righteous demands for justice stemming from the murder of George Floyd and countless other Black victims of police violence. Yet, only months after this bill was passed, the police unions are seeking to roll it back. The City should show that it is serious about creating real and lasting change in policing and uphold the original language of the chokehold bill.
In order to protect the safety and first amendment rights of New Yorkers, NYPD and the City and State as a whole must **comprehensively reform the way that it addresses protests**. The police response to the protests following the murder of George Floyd were characterized by violent tactics that enflamed tensions rather than de-escalating them, including but not limited to indiscriminant use of batons and chemical weapons, kettling crowds, and vehicular ramming. The impact of this antagonism was amplified by the Governor and Mayor’s misguided decision to implement a curfew that violated the civil rights of New Yorkers.

It is extremely important that individual officers are held accountable for misconduct that took place. Further, the Police Department and other government partners must ensure that when protests occur, they do not create feedback loops of escalation, but instead utilize measured tactics that uphold the right to dissent while helping to maintain community safety. In order to do so, the NYPD must cease its dependence on the heavily militarized Strategic Response Unit in these situations.

Additionally, the City and State must **ban the police use of spit hoods**, which are mesh head coverings used by law to protect against pathogens when a detainee is biting or spitting. Their design causes risk of asphyxiation for the person that it is placed upon and obscures their head and face, which can make it difficult for officers to see if they are struggling to breathe. According to the New York Times, they have been involved in 70 deaths in law enforcement custody over the past decade, nationwide, including the tragic killing of Daniel Prude in Rochester.229 In their place, we must implement alternative measures to prevent transmission of disease that ensure the safety of all involved.

The recent report from the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) that indicates that tasers are disproportionately used on New Yorkers of more color and those experiencing mental health crises is deeply concerning.230 While tasers are positioned by some as a non-lethal alternative to guns, the senseless death of George Zapantis in Queens demonstrates that taser use can have fatal consequences. It is critical that the NYPD implements protocols that **limit the use of tasers** and minimize their negative impacts on health and safety. These must include banning taser use on anyone who is handcuffed and severely restricting the use of “drive stun” mode. Further, the City Council should pass this Office’s bill Intro. 2013 which would require officers to report the number of discharges used during a use of force incident and require that any future purchases of body worn cameras by the New York City Police Department be cameras that are capable of automatically activating when a taser is armed.

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Create Accountability

The City Council should pass a bill requiring the NYPD to report on Level 1 and Level 2 stops, which occur when an officer does not have reasonable suspicion of criminal activity. Our office plans on introducing such a bill shortly. These reports must document the race of those stopped as well as their rationale for their being stopped. Our communities deserve to know all instances in which police officers are engaging with members of their neighborhoods and why those interactions are happening. We cannot address the issue of disparate policing enforcement without first knowing the full scope of this problem. As seen through the reforms made to Stop, Question, and Frisk over the past decade, data can be a key instigator of needed reforms in policing.

While the CCRB investigates police misconduct and makes recommendations based on its findings, it does not hold the ability to enforce those decisions—that power lies solely in the hands of the Police Department, which presents a conflict of interest in issuing appropriate discipline. In order to address this problem and ensure accountability, the City should make CCRB decisions binding. The NYPD Commissioner should not be able to override objective determinations made after due process investigations occur.

Further, the CCRB must be given the tools and information it needs to conduct its work. Reports showing that the NYPD is consistently refusing to share body camera footage to CCRB investigators are deeply concerning. As of June 2020, the NYPD had failed to respond to 1,137 requests regarding body camera footage concerning potential police misconduct. This allows the NYPD to control the pace of investigations that are supposed to be occurring independently and significantly decreases the rate at which CCRB cases can be closed with determinative findings. As such, the NYPD must create mechanisms that automatically grant the CCRB access to needed footage. This footage must also be provided to the Office of the inspector General and the Department of Records and Information Services. The City Council should pass this Office’s bill, Intro. 1989, which would grant them this access.

End Oppressive Technology

In order for the NYPD to do its job effectively, it must be equipped with tools that meet the technological standards of the modern age. However, it is crucial that the NYPD’s use of technology is fully transparent, non-discriminatory, respectful of privacy rights, and limited to necessary use.

A key step in making this a reality is to dismantle its ineffective and harmful Gang Database, which uses overly broad criteria to classify people, predominantly boys and young men of color, as criminal threats without any basis for doing so. This has resulted in invasive surveillance, loss of job opportunities, and deportation for those on the database. Portland has dismantled their gang database due to these concerns, and New York City should follow their lead. In doing so, all related databases and analysis systems must be permanently destroyed, with all input systems removed, and all external sharing capabilities disabled. Oversight and transparency from an external body on what data systems were used to facilitate the gang database is needed in order to ensure its complete destruction and in order to prevent future iterations from emerging. Further, the NYPD should be prohibited from sharing any existing gang designations and data with third parties, designating anyone a gang member, and inputting that form of data into any other databases.

In addition, the NYPD must end its rogue municipal DNA database, which has collected the DNA of over 80,000 New Yorkers, many of whom have not been charged with a crime and are unaware that the police have their genetic information. While State Law mandates the state DNA database to report on who is in this database and why, no such requirements exist on a municipal level. Thus, the State should pass S1347 (Hoylman) which would end municipal DNA databases and consolidate DNA collection on the State level. Our Office is currently pursuing legislation on the City level that would ban all municipal agencies from collecting and storing DNA. We are additionally looking to require the NYPD to notify all people who are in the database of their inclusion and to also report on the current collection and use of DNA of minors.

235 theappeal.org/portland-is-saying-goodbye-to-its-controversial-gang-database-e88e6c05262c/
Furthermore, our Office is excited to partner with Amnesty International and the Stop Technology Oversight Project in a campaign to mimic Oakland and San Francisco in banning the use of facial recognition technology in public spaces. This technology seriously violates the civil rights of New Yorkers and has been shown to lack accuracy in identifying non-white faces, creating the potential for those of more color being wrongly charged with criminal offenses.\footnote{www.nytimes.com/2019/12/19/technology/facial-recognition-bias.html} New York State should pass \textit{S79} (Hoylman) to prevent law enforcement from using this invasive and inaccurate technology.

There are also serious concerns around gait recognition, which the NYPD has begun using to identify people via their walk, and other biometric data collection. The Department must immediately place a moratorium around these invasive tools. In addition, it should place a moratorium on all geo-tracking technologies including stingrays, and wi-fi and bluetooth tracking. On all of the above technologies, the Police Department should be subject to public review of past and current use so that New Yorkers understand their effectiveness and consequences, and evaluate if these tools should be used moving forward.

The implications of the “\textit{predictive policing}” strategies that the NYPD has begun to implement are also troubling.\footnote{www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/nypd-predictive-policing-documents} These techniques use data to pre-emptively anticipate crime—its potential whereabouts and its perpetrators. The crux of the problem here is that the data that used to inform this policing is racially biased due to the discriminatory history of police data collection, including the over-policing of communities of color and the worst abuses of stop, question, and frisk. Further, predictive policing also includes the hyper-surveillance of social media, which violates civil liberties and can criminalize harmless expressions of speech. We must find ways to ensure that use of modern technologies does not interfere with basic rights. Again, a moratorium should be placed on these strategies and their use should be subject to public review.

In addition, the City should follow the lead of cities like Nashville and Seattle, that have passed laws giving their City Councils the ability to approve or vote down police purchases of surveillance technology. This \textit{POST Act 2.0} would guarantee that the implementation of technologies with serious civil liberties implications would be subject to oversight and transparency.

\textsuperscript{236} www.nytimes.com/2019/12/19/technology/facial-recognition-bias.html
\textsuperscript{237} www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/nypd-predictive-policing-documents
Budget

Budgets are moral documents that reflect our priorities. When comparing the NYPD’s bloated annual budget to the underfunding of so many other key agencies, it is clear that the City is over-depending on law enforcement to address the myriad of problems that we face. While law enforcement has a core role to play in reducing crime and ensuring public safety, we must recognize that jobs, education, housing, physical and mental health do as well. As such, it is critical that we correctly frame the public safety discussion and resource it accordingly. This will have to include the reallocation of funding from the NYPD to other services that also promote public safety.

As written throughout this report, there are a multitude of ways to produce public safety through targeted community solutions that do not involve law enforcement. Please see our Office’s Redefining Public Safety platform outline for a summary of ten key issue areas where we can improve further personal and community wellbeing through non-police strategies. If implemented, these programs could create significant savings on police expenditures.

In the upcoming budget processes, surface-level manipulation of expenditures and unrealistic goals for cuts to overtime will not suffice. At a time when all other City agencies are under a hiring freeze and being instructed by the Mayor to plan for significant cuts, it is wrong to exempt the NYPD from cost-cutting measures. The City should freeze all NYPD hiring in line with all other agencies.

In addition, the NYPD must abide by the same budgetary reporting requirements as all other agencies and provide an itemized breakdown of their expenditures. This would provide an opportunity for the City to identify potential savings in the midst of the current fiscal crisis and foster more trust with the public, who would be better able to understand the scope of their work.
2. ENDING MASS INCARCERATION

From 1993 to 2018, New York City reduced its jail population by 55%. Over the same period, major crime in the City declined by 78%. It is clear that mass incarceration does not create a safer City. It does, however, create irreparable harm for those impacted and their loved ones on both a social and economic level. As we enter a new decade, New York City must look to:

- Minimize its jail population by enacting legislation that allows opportunities for incarcerated New Yorkers who are at low-risk of recidivism to reintegrate into their communities;
- Cut off the numerous pipelines that feed into the carceral system by ending the over-criminalization of New Yorkers who are immigrants, LGBTQ+, and of more color;
- Improve the conditions of those who are incarcerated and work to ensure that our penal system is centered around rehabilitation rather than punishment.
- Ensure the Department of Corrections (DOC) budget and staffing levels reflect the decreasing population of incarcerated New Yorkers.
- Apply a lens that uplifts the experiences of those who are uniquely positioned at the intersections of racist, sexist, anti-LGBTQ and ableist systems, and seek to dramatically minimize incarceration.

Decarcerate

Despite our country’s core principle of “innocent until proven guilty”, more than three-quarters of New York City’s jail population has not been convicted of a crime. Our current system makes it so that lower-income people awaiting trial are disproportionately held in detention due to inability to pay cash bail, while wealthier people charged with the same offenses can avoid detention due to their financial means. In 2019, the State took key steps to rectify this fundamental injustice by passing comprehensive bail reform legislation that eliminated bail for most misdemeanors and non-violent offenses. However, fear-mongering and sensationalism led to these reforms being rolled back almost immediately after they took effect, making dozens more of offenses bail-eligible. The State must reinstate the original terms of the 2019 bail reform laws, ensure the right to a speedy trial, and stop incarcerating New Yorkers for simply being poor.

238 criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/data_stories/5-ways-nyc-is-safer-today/
239 Ibid.
240 www.pbs.org/wnet/rikers/incarceration-faq/#:~:text=About%2060%25%20of%20people%20held,the%20Bureau%20of%20Justice%20Statistics.&text=Seventy%2Dnine%20percent%20of%20detainees,been%20convicted%20of%20a%20crime.
In addition, New York State needs to implement reforms that end overly punitive parole enforcement that unnecessarily re-incarcerates New Yorkers who have served their time. In 2016, over 6,300 people were re-incarcerated due to a technical parole violation such as missing an appointment with a parole officer, being late for curfew, or testing positive for alcohol.\textsuperscript{241} In order to give formerly incarcerated New Yorkers a fair chance at re-integrating into their communities, the State must pass the \textbf{Less is More: Community Supervision Revocation Reform Act, S1144} (Benjamin), which would restrict the use of incarceration for technical violations.

Further, the State must work to significantly lower the number of aging New Yorkers who are incarcerated. Research has consistently shown that incarcerated people over the age 50 are extremely unlikely to recidivate.\textsuperscript{242} Despite this, the number of people in this demographic in New York prisons has doubled over the past two decades, to over 10,000.\textsuperscript{243} In order to provide these New Yorkers with an opportunity to avoid virtual life sentences, the State should pass the \textbf{Elder Parole Act, A3475} (De La Rosa) / \textbf{S15} (Hoylman), which would grant the right to a parole hearing to those who have served over fifteen years in prison and are over the age of 55. This should happen in concordance with the passage of the \textbf{Fair and Timely Parole Act, S1415} (Rivera), which would require the State Board of Parole to evaluate cases on the basis of an incarcerated person’s rehabilitative efforts.

Further, given the increased risk of transmission of COVID-19 within the crowded and unhygienic confines of carceral facilities, the City and State must take action to minimize the jail and prison population throughout the pendency of the pandemic. New York should mimic pending legislation in New Jersey, \textbf{S2519}, which would grant \textbf{early release} to most incarcerated people within one year of completing their sentence.

Finally, the City and State should look to expand the positive impact of its Alternative to Detention and Alternative to Incarceration programs, which have helped reduce prison and jail populations by diverting offenders to targeted services including mental health and substance use treatment, vocational and educational support and development, and trauma-informed counseling.\textsuperscript{244} Most recently, the City has implemented a successful expansion of diversion programs for women that includes supportive housing for those experiencing homelessness. The City should mimic this approach to other vulnerable populations, especially New Yorkers with disabilities and LGBTQ+ New Yorkers. This upcoming fiscal year the City should double its $11,878,800 in funding for these programs.

\textsuperscript{241} d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/katal/pages/2076/attachments/original/1596812791/Fact_Sheet_-_Parole_Reform__Less_is_More_NY_6.30.20.pdf?1596812791
\textsuperscript{242} www.issuelab.org/resources/22902/22902.pdf
\textsuperscript{243} www.osborneny.org/resources/the-high-costs-of-low-risk/hclr/
\textsuperscript{244} criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/programs/safely-reducing-the-jail-population-diversion/
Reduce Entry Points to the Justice System

New York must also do work on the front end to stop the in-flow of incarceration by **legalizing marijuana** — a step that numerous States across the country have already taken. In doing so, it is critical that New York employs a racial justice framework that recognizes that the criminal enforcement of marijuana has disproportionately affected communities of more color, despite marijuana use being consistent across races.\(^{245}\) This means commuting the sentences of those convicted of marijuana related offenses, directing tax revenue from sales to communities that were hit hardest by the war on drugs, and providing entrepreneurs from these communities with opportunities to enter the legal cannabis industry. In this aim, the Legislature must pass and the Governor must sign **A1248** (Peoples-Stokes) / **S854S** (Krueger). In preparation of this bill passing, the City should pass legislation that would mimic requirements put in place by Cambridge, Massachusetts, that prioritize restorative justice in issuing marijuana sales licenses.

Further, the State should **end the failed war on drugs** and move towards an approach to drugs that prioritizes public health. Rather than incarcerating folks due to substance dependency and its consequences, we should look to provide connections to health resources that can put New Yorkers on the road to recovery. As the City evaluates public policy approaches, it should closely study the progress that Portugal has made in reducing addiction, overdose, and disease transmission through the decriminalization of consumption and possession.\(^{246}\) Further, all levels of government need to ensure that their responses to substance use are not racially discriminatory. There is a clear contrast between the punitive response to the crack cocaine epidemic, which was associated with Black Americans, and the health-based response to the opioid epidemic, which is associated with white Americans.

In addition, the State must **repeal the discriminatory Walking While Trans law**, Penal Section 240.37, which sets out extremely vague language criminalizing loitering for the purpose of engaging in a prostitution offense. This law allows police to arrest people, disproportionately trans women of color, for soliciting sex with no evidence. It is critical for the State to pass **A3355**(Paulin) / **S1351** (Hoylman).

The State should also **decriminalize sex work**. New Yorkers of all stripes participate in sex work, but due to economic marginalization and a host of other factors, people of more color, immigrants, queer people, and trans people work in the industry at higher rates. The current illegality of this work perpetuates the disproportionate incarceration of these communities. The State should cut off this pipeline to the justice system by decriminalizing sex work through the passage of **A849** (Gottfried) / **S3075** (Salazar). Doing so would also provide labor protections to workers who are currently excluded from them; increase safety

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by allowing workers to report assault and other forms of violence without fear of retribution from law enforcement; and promote public health by increasing access and usage of condoms.

Additionally, the City Council should pass Intro. 2073 (Constantinides), which would decriminalize jaywalking. Despite jaywalking being a common practice across races and neighborhoods, 89% of related tickets in 2020 went to Black and Latinx New Yorkers.\(^\text{247}\) While pedestrians should be encouraged to use the crosswalk and follow traffic signals, current enforcement practices are both excessive and discriminatory.

We must also take proactive measures to strengthen protections around juvenile justice. The American Bar Association has found that children are more than three times as likely to falsely confess to a crime due to pressure from interregotation, and we have seen the tragic results of this phenomenon in New York City in high profile cases such as the Central Park jogger case.\(^\text{248}\) The State should pass S2800 (Bailey), which would provide a number of protections for children and their families that would reduce the risk of self-incrimination. Our Office is proud to carry Res. 1378 in support of this bill. The Council should also pass this Office’s bill with Council Member Chin, Intro. 2012, which would require the NYPD issue a quarterly report on custodial interrogations of minors broken down by important procedural and demographic categories.

\(^{247}\) data.cityofnewyork.us/Public-Safety/NYPD-Jaywalking-Tickets-Jan-Oct-2019/8s6u-739x

\(^{248}\) olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/109353#:~:text=Another%20study%20of%20340%20exonera,with%20only%2013%25%20of%20adults.&text=Like%20John%2C%20the%20police%20fed,that%20confessing%20would%20help%20Brendan.
As decarceration is an intersectional initiative that dovetails with other issue areas, additional points on reducing justice involvement are raised throughout the body of this report. Please see the Education & Opportunity section of this report for more details around ending the school-to-prison pipeline including removing police officers from schools. See the Housing Equity section for a breakdown around ending the use of law enforcement to address homelessness as well as stopping the over-criminalization of public housing residents. See the Civic & Community Empowerment section to read our Office’s calls for the end of federal immigration enforcement in New York City as well as ending cooperation between the NYPD and ICE. And see the Infrastructure & Environmental Justice section for plans for ending punitive fare evasion enforcement through the expansion of the Fair Fares program.

**Improve Carceral Conditions**

Solitary confinement is a torturous punishment that causes deep and permanent psychological, physical, and social harm. It is an ineffective, counterproductive, and unsafe disciplinary practice that fails to address the underlying causes of problematic behavior. On the State level, the Legislature must pass and the Governor must sign the HALT Solitary Confinement Act, **A2277 (Aubry) / S2836 (Salazar)**, which would implement critical restrictions on solitary. New York City must go further and end solitary confinement immediately. In this aim, the City Council must pass **Int. 2173 (Dromm)** once necessary changes are made to the bill language that would increase access to out of cell time and eliminate the potential for the emergence of “solitary under another name” through the use of Restrictive Housing.

Solitary confinement can be safely replaced with alternatives that prioritize rehabilitation, health, safety, and basic human rights. For example, the Clinical Alternative to Punitive Segregation (CAPS) program has already been implemented in New York City jails for those living with serious mental illnesses. Instead of placing folks in solitary units that only exacerbate existing behavioral problems, this program provides intense programming, out of cell time, therapy and recreation activities. This has resulted in improved outcomes and safety, including a significant decrease in self-harm and injury. The success of CAPS should not be confined to those with serious mental illnesses. This approach can and should be applied for all New Yorkers in DOC facilities.

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Rehabilitation and well-being must be at the center of the function of correctional facilities. In order for this to occur, these facilities must be staffed with an adequate number of social workers. The City Council should pass this Office’s bill Intro 2008, which would require the Department of Corrections to maintain a ratio of one social worker for every ten incarcerated persons at each city correctional facility. This bill would also require the Department to issue quarterly reports on this issue in order to ensure compliance.

Connection with loved ones is also critical to the mental and emotional well-being of incarcerated New Yorkers. Especially with the current pandemic making in-person visits an impossibility, we must strengthen access to videoconferencing. The City Council should pass this Office’s bill, Int. 2009, which would authorize the right to a minimum of five video conferencing calls per week for a minimum duration of one hour per call. In addition to helping incarcerated people maintain family and community ties, this bill is needed to apply standards and increase access to videoconferencing with defense attorneys, which is integral to fair criminal procedure.

Those who work for the State while incarcerated carry out important work, including producing much-needed hand sanitizer for the public during the current pandemic. Yet, these New Yorkers make an average of $0.65 per hour, which amounts to less than 5% of the State’s minimum wage. This racialized exploitation of prison labor must end. In incentivizing the continuation of mass incarceration and failing to humanely compensate workers, New York is, quite simply, extending of the legacy of slavery. The State should explore a Real Wages for All New Yorkers Act that would ensure that prison labor is compensated at the State minimum wage. The State should additionally pass The Freedom From Forced Labor Act, A3142 (Epstein) / S308 (Myrie), which would ensure that all prison labor occurs voluntarily without any form of coercion. Until these needed reforms are made, the State must stop forcing municipalities, including New York City, to contract with the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) for needed supplies. In this aim, our Office has introduced Res. 1380 in the City Council.

Despite producing it, incarcerated persons in New York are not permitted to use hand sanitizer while in custody, as its alcohol content qualifies it as contraband. This restriction poses a severe health threat, especially during the current pandemic. Our Office is currently pursuing legislation in the City Council that would require the DOC to provide hand sanitizer to those in custody.

Further, New York must make a number of reforms to the commissary system. First, the State must pass A1413 (Fernandez) / S1051 (Ramos), which would repeal the unjust law requiring commissaries to make a profit via markups on goods and replace it with a mandate for commissaries to sell goods at market price. Second, the DOC must establish a cost-free remote mechanism by which members of the public can

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remotely deposit money into a facility resident’s commissary account. Currently, the only way to deposit money to a facility resident’s DOC account without incurring a fee is in person at a DOC cashier’s window. And third, the City Council should pass Intro. 903 (Adams), which would require the DOC to take critical steps towards ensuring that folks can receive their unused commissary funds upon being discharged.

Additionally, the City Council should pass this Office’s bill, Intro. 1881, which would require the DOC to provide no-cost copies of school transcripts, social security cards, and driver’s licenses, to folks being discharged. A study from the National Justice Institute found that 56% of incarcerated individuals needed assistance in obtaining official identification, which is a serious barrier to finding employment upon release.251 This bill would play an important role in breaking down this barrier in New York City.

Lastly, the DOC must significantly improve the programming it provides to those in its custody. In order to do so, it must provide detailed plans and reporting regarding its legal obligation to provide five hours of daily programming to incarcerated New Yorkers. To ensure that all residents have access to these programs, all facilities should provide menus that lay out what programs are offered. Further, the DOC should integrate the Program Council of providers into Department decision-making, so that program design, participation, and efficacy can be maximized.

**Budget**

As we commit to reducing our incarcerated population in New York City with the closing of Rikers Island, we must reflect these shifts in our budget. The City’s Department of Corrections Officers carry out critical work, but with the incarcerated population dropping from 8,397 in 2018252 to the Mayor’s target of 3,000 by 2026,253 DOC staffing levels need to decrease as well, beginning with attrition strategies. Overstaffing is fiscally wasteful and also leads to excessive use of force, which has already hit an “all-time high” according to the Federal Monitor assigned to oversee the DOC.254 Currently, there are 1.59 Corrections Officers for every incarcerated person in the City. If staffing levels remain constant, this ratio is set to increase even further in coming years. The City should reach the 0.73:1 officer to incarcerated person ratio that the Independent Commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform has recommended.255

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251 myemail.constantcontact.com/WILLIAMS-INTRODUCES-BILL-TO-PROVIDE-OFFICIAL-RECORDS-TO-FORMERLY-INCARCERATED-PEOPLE.html?soid=1102557709761&aid=BHIfDg9NqwE
252 criminaljustice.cityofnewyork.us/individual_charts/average-daily-jail-population-in-nyc/
255 static1.squarespace.com/static/5b6de4731afe1d914f43628/t/5b96c6f81ae6cf5e9c5f186d/1536607993842/Lippman%2BCommission%2BReport%2BFINAL%2BSingles.pdf
In order to do so, we must place a moratorium on new DOC hires. We must also provide a just transition for DOC staff, which is notably made up of mostly New Yorkers who are women of more color. This means providing early retirement packages to long-serving members and providing pathways to jobs with comparable pay and benefits within City Government by granting these employees priority status during the application process.

3. IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH

The pandemic has illustrated the severe consequences of inadequate public health policies. The City must continue to take targeted measures to reduce the impact of and ultimately eliminate COVID-19, and implement proactive strategies to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of New Yorkers.

Access to Healthcare

It is gravely concerning that instead of increasing access to health care in the midst of a pandemic, the State is doing the opposite. Through the recent State budgetary process, the Governor cut approximately 1.6 billion dollars in state Medicaid funding, including $138 million dollars from New York Health + Hospitals. He must = immediately restore this funding and ensure that our hospital system has the resources that it needs.12

The need for all New Yorkers to have health insurance has always been imminent, and this crisis has shined a brighter light on this need. This legislative session, the New York State Legislature must pass and the Governor must sign the New York Health Act (Gottfried) / (Rivera). This bill would create a universal, comprehensive program— including dental, vision, and long-term care—eliminating all co-pays, deductibles, and premiums.

In addition, as I explain in the Education & Opportunity section of this report, we must ensure **health insurance coverage for gig workers** by ending their systematic misclassification as independent contractors and provide them with the rights afforded to part and full-time employees. For those legitimately classified as independent contractors, we must establish a Portable Benefits Program that includes health insurance, that is tied to the individual worker rather than the employer, so that it can be taken from job to job without interruption in coverage or loss of funding.

Further, providers, public and private insurance companies, and governmental bodies must work in conjunction to eliminate out of pocket payments for all testing, vaccination, treatment, and recovery related to COVID-19. If necessary, the federal government should take legislative action to ensure this can take place. Additionally, upon the end of the crisis, these stakeholders must work to provide cost-free screenings related to the lasting impacts of COVID-19 including lung screenings and mental health screenings. As there are currently no long-term survivors of COVID-19, research on lasting effects of this virus is limited. People who develop severe symptoms can have lasting lung, heart, and kidney damage; blood clot; and psychological problems including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and post-intensive care syndrome (PICS).  

As many people with COVID-19 are unable to access testing for a confirmed diagnosis, limiting health coverage to people with COVID-19 diagnoses is insufficient. Healthcare should extend to all New Yorkers with lasting illnesses.

**Second Wave**

The second wave of COVID-19 does not have to be as deadly or damaging as the first, as long as an effective plan is in place and enacted swiftly. Please see our Office’s recently released **White Paper: In the Event of a Second Wave** for important considerations and recommendations to best protect all New Yorkers, especially those in disproportionately impacted and vulnerable communities.

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Gun Violence

The tragic increase in gun violence that has plagued the city this year is nothing short of a public health crisis. The Police Department has a critical role in addressing this issue, as do other community stakeholders including the Crisis Management System (CMS) violence interrupters, whose roles need to be strengthened. The City needs to increase by $23 million CMS funding immediately so that we can maximize its presence in areas of high risk. In this regard, our Office is encouraged by the Mayor’s recent commitment to doubling staffing for CMS.
Mental Health

In 2018, the NYPD received 179,569 emergency calls involving individuals in mental health crisis. The City must do more to prevent these crises from occurring by strengthening local community based mental health infrastructure, especially in communities of color. This must include investing fully in respite care centers, drop-in centers, mental health urgent care centers, and safe havens, which provide real alternatives to emergency rooms and jail cells for vulnerable New Yorkers.

When mental health crises do occur, the City must focus its efforts on providing those in crisis with the services they need to avert immediate danger and advance to quick recovery. These services are best provided by those who specialize in them: social workers, medics, and mental health peers; not law enforcement officers who specialize in addressing crime. Please see my report Improving New York City’s Responses to Individuals in Mental Health Crisis for a full breakdown of my proposal to implement a citywide non-police response system to mental health crises.

As I explain in the Education and Opportunity section of this report, it is also critical that we begin addressing mental health at a young age. I am calling for the increased staffing of psychologists, social workers, and guidance counselors in all city public schools.

Substance Misuse

The data from cities that have implemented them demonstrate that safe injection sites have succeeded in reducing overdoses, drug-related deaths, and transmission of HIV. Our Office supports the Mayor’s smart decision to launch a pilot of four safe injection sites in New York City. Unfortunately, the Governor’s Health Department is currently blocking its implementation. The Governor and his Administration should allow this pilot to launch and for the pilot to expand further if it proves successful.

Additionally, the State should pass A868 (Gottfried) / S2523 (Rivera) to decriminalize the possession of hypodermic needles and syringes. This is a key harm reduction strategy that will reduce the transmission of infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS and increase participation in addiction intervention programs.

261 nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/03/special-report-nypds-mental-illness-response-breakdown.html
262 www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5685449/
The City and State must also continue to expand access and training on how to use Narcan, which is an effective tool in reversing an overdose. Further, the successful methadone delivery program that the City has put in place during the pandemic has demonstrated that we can safely reduce regulatory barriers to critical medications. Moving forward, this delivery program should continue and New York should take measured steps to permit take home dosages for patients who meet appropriate criteria.

**Black Maternal Health**

In New York City, black pregnant persons are as many as twelve times more likely to die of pregnancy related causes than their white counterparts.\(^{263}\) Further, it appears that the complications of the pandemic have worsened disparities in maternal care and outcomes. It is clear that immediate steps must be taken to end this crisis. A key component is to expand birthing options outside of the hospital system. Currently the City only has a single public birthing center. The State and City should create a citywide network of birthing centers, prioritizing construction in neighborhoods that have the highest rates of maternal mortality. This must be a key priority in upcoming budgetary allocations.

Additionally, New York should promote access to doulas, childbirth professionals who provide support to pregnant persons throughout the birthing process and have been shown to improve health outcomes in New York City.\(^{264}\) The same holds true for access to midwives, medical professionals who specialize in assisting with delivery. In order to do so, the State should reduce its over-regulation of these professions, which currently makes it very difficult to pursue them as careers, and conduct more active community outreach to inform pregnant persons of these service options.

In addition, the City should strengthen the impact of its Standards for Respectful Birth by mandating its distribution to all pregnant persons at City Hospitals. Facilities that fail to abide by these standards should be held accountable through penalties. Further, our Office is in strong support of the federal Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act, a comprehensive legislative package that would take key steps to ending preventable maternal death and closing racial disparities in maternal health.\(^{265}\) This package was introduced as H.R.6142 (Underwood) S.3424 (Harris) in the previous congressional session.

Additionally, the City’s health experts must development and circulate a guideline that informs all medical personnel how to ensure their healthcare is bias-free, particularly concerning pregnant transgender men and non-binary people. Medical personnel must respect and treat all pregnant patients with the care and respect they deserve.


Health and Safety for TGNC People

New York City has made important strides in promoting and advancing the rights for our transgender, gender non-conforming community in recent years, but there is still much progress that needs to be made. In recent months, transphobic violence has increased and the City has not responded with a comprehensive plan for the protection and safety of our transgender community, particularly Black trans women and non-binary femmes. Our Office strongly supports increased funding towards employment and education services such as the previously defunded Unity Works for our transgender community. We also believe all New Yorkers have the personal and community-wide responsibility to dismantle toxic masculinity, another factor that has incited violence against the TGNC community.

Additionally, healthcare for transgender persons must be improved. Our Office supports increased access to hormone therapy for transgender patients, and more funding towards gender-affirming surgeries, which has direct linkage to the average life-expectancy of trans people. It is also important that medical providers are properly trained how to administer proper care to TGNC New Yorkers. In order to ensure that these folks are getting the medical care they deserve, the City Council should pass this Office’s bill Intro. 2119, which would require DOHMH to report on such training.

Additionally, the current Patients’ Bill of Rights does not explicitly mention the right to be addressed by the name and gender pronouns a patient chooses. Current city-wide policy does protect intentional misgendering, but victims do not have the necessary tools to assert their rights or even know they can. NYC Health + Hospitals should explicitly state in the Patients Bill of Rights that every patient has the right to be referred to as their name and gender pronouns by choice. Our Office calls on hospitals to post signage in all facilities informing patients of their rights to be referred to as the name and gender they choose and information on how to take legal action against medical personnel that deliberately misgender or deadname their patients. In this aim, the Council should pass this Office’s bill Intro. 2120.

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**Childcare**

While the City has established universal Pre-K and is currently rolling out universal 3-K, there are serious gaps in our infrastructure for infant and toddler care. As Attorney General James has written, the average family spends up to $16,250 per year in care for an infant and $11,648 for a toddler. Our Office supports Comptroller Stringer’s NYC Before Three proposal, which would improve affordability, accessibility, and quality of care by implementing a sliding scale co-payment program that would set stricter caps on the percentage of family income going towards care than currently are in place. The City should kickstart this program by dedicating $182 million towards year one of its implementation in the upcoming budget.

Our Office also supports the expansion of expanding the Regional Enrichment Centers/Learning Bridges childcare program throughout the duration of the pandemic. This program should be available five days a week to all students, including those who are participating in 100% remote learning. Please see our White Paper: On Re-Opening Schools for more details.

**Child Welfare**

Instead of prioritizing keeping families together, our current child welfare system defaults to child separation. This approach is unquestionably racially discriminatory, with 74% of families under investigation being Black or Latinx in 2017. Too many of these cases are decided against these families due to processes that are heavily weighted against defendants. Our Office is in strong support of the City Council’s pending legislative package that would increase parental rights in ACS proceedings including Intros. 1715 (Adams) and 1728 (Levin) to extend right to counsel, Intro. 1718 (Chin) to further language access, and Intros. 1729 (Levin) and 1736 (Rivera) to require ACS to communicate parents rights. Further, ACS criteria punishes parents for behaviors that are unrelated to ability to raise children including histories of sex work and drug use—this must end now.

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269 Ibid.
Nursing Homes

The State’s handling of protocols around nursing homes during the peak of the pandemic was nothing short of disastrous. In late March, the State directed these facilities to accept coronavirus patients, which resulted in the virus rapidly spreading amongst inherently vulnerable New Yorkers. Despite the Gubernatorial Administration’s monthslong refusal to provide transparency on this issue we now know that these decisions contributed to the deaths of at least 12,743 New Yorkers. It is crucial that the State provide full data transparency on this issue. Further, the State must develop airtight protocols that ensure that this tragedy does not repeat itself during this pandemic or any future health crises.

Sexual Health

New York has some of the country’s highest rates of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis. We must expand rapid STI testing to curb transmission of these and other STIs. Specifically, this should happen through the expansion of the City’s community health center network, which provides no or low-cost accessible services to vulnerable populations. The City must also expand its rapid testing sites throughout the city, which provide rapid STI results and reduce transmission. Additionally, we need to further our commitment to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic in New York by expanding access to pre and post exposure prophylaxis (PrEP and PEP), providing high-quality care for those who are positive, and furthering the test and trace program. In this aim, the City should add $3 million in funding to the Ending the Epidemic initiative in the upcoming budget.

Also, the State needs to comprehensively improve its approach to sexual education in public schools. Currently there is no mandate to include sexual health in school curriculum, resulting in only 38% of middle schools and 80% of high schools in the State teaching the subject to students. The State should pass S2584 (Brouk) which would mandate public schools to provide comprehensive sexual education that is age appropriate, medically accurate, and inclusive of all students. In devising curriculum standards, critical topics including consent, safe sex practices, gender identity, and sexual orientation should be included.

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272 abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/ny-nursing-home-virus-deaths-undercounted-ag-75539765
273 www.alarms.org/std-statistics/
**Health Workers**

At the peak of the pandemic, we saw hospitals struggle with shortages in personal protective equipment (PPE), that put the health and safety of healthcare workers and their patients at risk. A significant factor in this shortage is the dependence on disposable respirators such as the N-95, which need to be replaced multiple times a day in medical settings in order to be used safely. The City and State can address this issue by investing in **reusable PPE** such as Elastomeric Filtering Facepiece Respirators (EFFRs) and Powered Air Purifying Respirators (PAPRs), which can last for years without needing to replace filters. This would strengthen the safety of our hospitals and also significantly reduce costs.

The State must also revise its policies for **home health care workers**. Currently, aides who work 24 hour shifts are currently only paid for 13 hours of work. The 13-hour policy is based on the assumption that workers are getting eight hours of sleep—at least five of which are uninterrupted—plus three hours for meals during each shift. However, most home care workers actively work more than these 13 hours in order to comprehensively carry out the duties of their jobs. This results in workers performing unpaid labor and patients often receiving less ideal care. In order to address this, the State should pass **A3145 (Epstein) / S6640 (Persaud)**, which would ensure that these workers get paid for all hours they are on-shift and can only work more than 12 hours in a shift if they voluntarily consent to it.

Lastly, our Office is in support of the framework laid out by Council Member Levine in his call for a $1 billion permanent **Public Health Corps** initiative that would create 15,000 jobs and strengthen the wellbeing of New York City communities throughout the pandemic and beyond.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS: JUSTICE, HEALTH EQUITY & SAFETY (BUDGET REQUESTS IN ITALICS)

1. Transforming Policing
   • Minimizing Use of Force
     • Uphold the language of the chokehold bill- Int. No. 536-B (Lancman)
     • Reform protest management- stop creating feedback loops of escalation
     • Ban spit hoods
     • Limit taser use- reporting: Intro. 2013 (Public Advocate Williams)
   • Accountability
     • Reporting bill on Level 1 and Level 2 stops
     • Make CCRB decisions binding
     • Grant CCRB access to needed footage
     • Grant OIG and DORIS access to needed footage- Intro. 1989 (Public Advocate Williams)
   • Technology
     • Dismantle gang database
     • End municipal DNA database- S1347 (Hoylman)
     • Ban facial recognition- S79 (Holyman)
     • Moratorium and public review on all biometric data collection, geo-tracking, and predictive policing
     • Post Act 2.0- require Council approval of NYPD technology procurement
   • Budget
     • Reallocation of funding from NYPD to essential services
     • Freeze all NYPD hiring
     • Require itemized breakdown of NYPD budget

2. Ending Mass Incarceration
   • Decarceration
     • Reinstate original terms of 2019 bail reform
     • Less is More: Community Supervision Revocation Reform Act, S1144 (Benjamin)
     • Elder Parole Act, A3475 (De La Rosa) / S15 (Hoylman)
     • Fair and Timely Parole Act, S1415 (Rivera)
     • Grant early release to those within one year of completing their sentence
     • Expand Alternative to Incarceration programs ($11.9 million- City)
• Reducing Entry Points to the Justice System
  • Legalize marijuana with racial justice framework- **A1248** (Peoples-Stokes) / **S854** (Krueger), prioritization of marijuana sales licenses to communities affected by War on Drugs
  • Repeal the Walking While Trans law- **A3355** (Paulin) / **S1351** (Hoylman)
  • Decriminalize sex work- **A849** (Gottfried) / **S3075** (Salazar)
  • Protect children from self-incrimination- **S2800** (Bailey)
  • NYPD to report on juvenile interrogation- **Intro. 2012** (Chin)
  • Decriminalize jaywalking- **Intro. 2073** (Constantinides)

• Carceral Conditions
  • Pass Statewide HALT Solitary Confinement Act- **A2277** (Aubry) / **S2836** (Salazar)
  • End solitary confinement in New York City- **Int. 2173** (Dromm)
  • Ratio of one social worker for every ten incarcerated persons- **Intro 2008** (Public Advocate Williams)
  • Strengthen access to videoconferencing- **Int. 2009** (Public Advocate Williams)
  • Apply $15 minimum wage to prison labor
  • Freedom From Forced Labor Act- **A3142** (Epstein) / **S208** (Myrie)
  • Stop forcing NYC to contract exploited prison labor- **Res. 1380** (Public Advocate Williams)
  • End commissary markups- **A1413** (Fernandez) / **S1051** (Ramos)
  • Create mechanism for cost free remote commissary deposits
  • Ensure discharged people receive unused commissary funds- **Intro. 903** (Adams)
  • Provide discharged people with no-cost copies of school transcripts, social security cards, and driver's licenses- **Intro. 1881** (Public Advocate Williams)

• Budget
  • 0.73:1 officer to incarcerated person ratio
  • Moratorium on new DOC hires
  • Just transition for DOC employees facing layoffs

3. Improving Public Health

• Access to Healthcare
  • Governor to restore cuts to Medicaid funding (**$1.6 billion- State**)
  • Universal health care- New York Health Act (Gottfried / Rivera)
  • Health insurance coverage for gig workers- reclassification and portable benefits program
  • Eliminate out of pocket payments for COVID-related medical care

• Second Wave Prevention and Preparation
  • **White Paper: In the Event of a Second Wave**

• Gun Violence
  • Strengthen Cure Violence- increase funding, add Advance Peace programming, provide COMPSTAT data (**$30.5 million- City**)
• Federal action- universal background checks, closing the gun show loophole, strengthening restrictions on military grade weapons, and curb gun trafficking

• Mental Health
  • Strengthen community based mental health infrastructure- 2 new Respite Centers ($7 million- City) and 4 new Support and Connection Centers ($20 million- City)
  • Non-police response system to mental health crises

• Substance Misuse
  • Governor to stop blocking safe injection site pilot
  • decriminalize the possession of hypodermic needles and syringes- A868 (Gottfried) / S2523 (Rivera)
  • Expand access to Narcan and methadone- expand Healing NYC ($38 million- City)

• Black Maternal Health
  • Expand birthing options- increase access to and reduce over-regulation of doulas and midwives
  • Maximize impact of Standards for Respectful Birth- implement accountability measures for providers and increase pamphlet distribution
  • Federal Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act
  • Prevent bias against pregnant trans men and non-binary folks

• TGNC Health
  • Comprehensive plan for the protection and safety of our transgender community
  • Healthcare for transgender persons- increase access to gender-affirming hormones and surgery, ending misgendering and deadnaming in healthcare settings

• Childcare
  • Comptroller’s NYC Before 3 proposal ($182 million- City)
  • Expanding Regional Enrichment Centers/Learning Bridge program

• Child Welfare
  • Increase parental rights in ACS proceedings- Intros. 1715, 1718, 1728, 1729, 1736
  • End weighing histories of sex work and drug use in determinations of parental fitness

• Nursing Homes
  • Accountability for pandemic errors

• Sexual Health
  • Expand rapid testing centers
  • Sex-positive education in schools- S2584 (Brouk)

• Health Workers
  • Invest in reusable PPE
  • End unpaid labor for home health aides- A3145 (Epstein) / S6640 (Persaud)
  • Public Health Corps
CONCLUSION

In recent months, I have seen some posit that the City and State can only recover from the pandemic by catering to the wealthiest New Yorkers. The presence of millionaires and billionaires is what keeps this New York moving, these folks argue. Thus, we must advance regressive economic policies that benefit their bottom line, minimize important cultural reckonings that offend their sensibilities, and even displace homeless folks whose simple presence disrupts their perceived “quality of life”.

While this analysis is dangerously wrong, I can recognize its appeal in this fraught moment. Catering to the most powerful has been the core operating principle of many of our elected leaders over the past decades. And in times of crisis, it can be comforting to revert to the status quo, even if that status quo is harmful and broken.

But in the face of compounding health and economic crises that have furthered inequality in New York, it is clear that we need to forge a better path forward. New York’s 118 billionaires have seen their wealth increase by a combined $77.3 billion over the course of the pandemic—they do not need any additional financial support. All New Yorkers, including the wealthiest ones, are needed at this moment and should be encouraged to engage in civic minded duties and responsibilities.

New Yorkers who are Black and Brown, LGBTQ+, and immigrants have been hit hardest by the compounding crises of sickness, job loss, and discrimination—these are the communities that we must be laser-focused on empowering. We can emerge from the darkness of 2020 by advancing progressive legislation, passing justice-oriented budgets, and launching transformative initiatives that can lift up those who are hurting the most. It is my hope that this document serves as a roadmap on how to do so. I encourage my colleagues in government to review these proposals, collaborate with me when they are in agreement, and engage with me in productive dialogue when they are not.

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