

**TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025**

**2:46 P.M.**

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The House will  
come to order.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

In the absence of clergy, let us pause for a moment of  
silence.

(Whereupon, a moment of silence was observed.)

Visitors are invited to join members in the Pledge of  
Allegiance.

(Whereupon, Acting Speaker Hunter led visitors and  
members in the Pledge of Allegiance.)

A quorum being present, the Clerk will read the  
Journal of Monday, March 24th.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Mr. -- Madam Speaker, I move to dispense with the further reading of the Journal of Monday, March the 24th and that the same stand approved.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Without objection, so ordered.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you. Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. Colleagues and the many guests that are in the Chambers, there's the words that I would like to share with you all today. This quote comes from Maya Angelou, who as we most know is a world-renowned poet, civil rights activist and a scholar. Her words for us today: "Never make someone a priority when all you are to them is an option."

So, Madam Speaker, colleagues have on their desks a main Calendar, and before you do any introductions and/or housekeeping we will call for the following committees to meet off the floor: Codes followed by Rules. These committees are going to produce an A- and a B-Calendar. We will begin our work on the floor by taking up resolutions on page 3. Then we're going to take up the following bills on debate: Calendar No. 31 by Mr. Weprin, Calendar No. 26 by Mr. Hevesi, and Calendar No. 29 by Ms. Paulin. The Majority members should be aware that there will be a need for a conference immediately following our work on the floor, and as always, Madam Speaker, we will check with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to determine what their needs may be.

That's a general outline of where we're going today,

Madam Speaker, so if you could please begin -- let -- let us begin by calling the Codes Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room right away. Thank you, ma'am.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Codes Committee immediately in the Speaker's Conference Room. Codes Committee, Speaker's Conference Room.

A bit of housekeeping.

On a motion by Ms. Rozic, page 11, Calendar No. 61, Bill No. A00387-A, the amendments are received and adopted.

On a motion by Mr. Epstein, page 6, Calendar No. 11, Bill No. A00056, the amendments are received and adopted.

We have several introductions this afternoon. Let us start with Ms. Levenberg for the purposes of an introduction.

MS. LEVENBERG: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to introduce youth advocates and chaperones from Start: Empowerment, Kier Blake and Gabriella Grinwald-Alves; students and teachers from High School for Teaching and Professions [sic], Seth Gilman, Lugman Fanny (phonetic), Isabella Ramos, Adiza Safu (phonetic); students from NYU; from LaGuardia High School, Jayden Jones; and students from the Lehman High School.

This morning these students joined members of the New York State Chapter of the Advocacy and Outreach Committee, a joint task force of the Climate Psychiatry Alliance and Climate Psychology Alliance of North America, to speak to legislators about the impact that climate change and associated extreme weather events

have on the mental health of young people and how New York State must learn to prepare and respond effectively to this situation. They urged us to continue to be national leaders in caring for the environment and mental well-being of our residents.

I thank them for their advocacy and ask that you give them all the cordialities of the House today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On behalf of Ms. Levenberg, the Speaker and all the members, we welcome you young people to our Chamber, extend the privileges of the floor to you. Thank you so very much for the work that you're doing for advocacy and the mental health impacts of climate change; important work that you young folks are doing. We hope you enjoy our proceedings today, and thank you so very much for joining us.

(Applause)

Mr. Maher for the purpose of an introduction.

MR. MAHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge someone who has been doing some great work in my Assembly District and is also an advocate throughout the State of New York. About a year ago, Tim Tebow testified at the House Judiciary Committee, and in his testimony he talked about a young girl who had gone through a horrible, horrible ordeal for seven years, and during that time she wrote this poem: *Rescue me. Help me. Monsters are chasing. Can't you see? Monsters are whispering.*

*Can't you hear? Monsters are shouting, "You are nothing." Can't you feel my pain? Monsters are pushing, "end it all, just jump." Can't you hear all the wise I am asking? Monsters are laughing, "You're all alone in this." Can someone please rescue me?*

During this testimony, Mr. Tebow talked about the thousands of children who are unaccounted for throughout the world. And while my guest Katrina Massey is not an individual who wrote that word -- those words, she truly embodies the spirit of those words. She is a mother of six, a successful real estate agent, a PTA president and a survivor of trafficking. She works for a non-profit that advocates for trafficking victims and services.

Madam Speaker, please allow her the privileges of the floor.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On behalf of Mr. Maher, the Speaker and all the members, we welcome you, ma'am, Ms. Massey, to our Assembly Chambers. We extend to you the privileges of the floor. Thank you for sharing your story so that others may learn. We hope you enjoy our proceedings today, and thank you so very much for joining us.

(Applause)

Mr. Taylor for the purposes of an introduction.

MR. TAYLOR: Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. Thank you so much. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the Dreamers here that have joined us today. And myself, along with my colleague Assemblymember Manny De Los Santos, as he's

walking through the door right here. We share this group because the school in which they operate sits across the street from my district and on the other side you have the coach and these wonderful, young folks here. And I'm just going to make sure I do this really quickly without butchering any names. The Uptown [sic] Dreamers are just phenomenal. When I made my walk from New York City to Chicago, it was a few of those Dreamers - not this group right here - that actually walked with me from the United Nations to the George Washington Bridge. They've gone on to college and are doing other things, but this is another generation of young people and I want to acknowledge Noah Amparo, Kailey Roman, Precious Leo, Celia Cruz, Sarah Pins, Gabriel Putin, Nick Harris, Gibran Pina -- Pena, Morgan Caceres - I hope I did that right - David Crenshaw, Jeff Crenshaw, Blanca Battino, Wanda Rosario and Eliezer Nunez.

And I would ask if you would please extend the cordialities of the House to these young folks. Did I miss someone? Oh, Pastor Crenshaw. I gave him -- I'm getting -- Eddie Gibbs an interruption here. But also, Pastor Crenshaw just finished the half marathon. He does that quite a lot. But if you would extend your cordialities to the House on behalf of myself and Assemblymember Manny De Los Santos.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On behalf of Mr. Taylor, Mr. De Los Santos, the Speaker and all the members, we welcome you to the Assembly Chamber. Always great to see the youngest young people here

advocating. We extend the privileges of the floor to you, hope you enjoy our proceedings today. Thank you all so very much for joining us today.

(Applause)

Ms. Forrest the purposes of an introduction.

MS. FORREST: Thank you so much, Miss [sic] Speaker, and also Majority Leader for allowing me to do this introduction. It is my honor to introduce the distinguished group of students from Brooklyn Prep and Bedford Academy today. Y'all can stand up, go ahead. Represent, yes. Okay. These students, along with their dedicated teachers, traveled from Brooklyn, the best borough in New York City, all the way to Albany to help highlight the importance of AP classes, advanced placement courses, in high schools. This distinguished Body supports the expansion of AP classes and the funding of them.

Earlier today, myself, along with several other legislatures [sic], were given the opportunity to speak to these bright, young students and stress on them the importance of education and taking advantage of every opportunity, including AP courses, to succ -- excel and succeed. Students who take advanced courses are more likely to attend college, earn higher wages and break cycles of poverty.

Madam Speaker, please extend the brightest and the best of my district and extend them the Assembly's wel -- extend them the cordialities of the floor.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On behalf of Ms. Forrest, the Speaker and all members, welcome, young people from Brooklyn Prep and Bedford Academy. We extend the privileges of the floor to you, hope you enjoy our proceedings today. Thank you so very much for joining us today.

(Applause)

Mr. DeStefano for the purposes of an introduction.

MR. DESTEFANO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to assure everybody it's not Halloween, this is something I wear very proudly once a year to show solidarity in the fire service. I'd like to introduce some members of some major organizations throughout New York State that serve the volunteer fire community, everywhere from Erie County all the way down to the tip of Long Island. With us today is some three or four organizations that I am so proud to introduce and work side-by-side. I've been in the fire service, as many of you know, for the last 46 years and an active Commissioner for the last 30. These people I've worked side-by-side with throughout the years, and serving on some of the boards with them.

From the Association of Fire Districts of the State of New York is our president, Joe Badala; our 1st Vice President, Dave Denniston; our 2nd Vice President, Ralph Raymond. We have a couple of directors with us. We have Rudy Sunderman and also John Manzi.



From the Association of Fire Chiefs we have Anthony Vincent LaFerrera, and from the Coordinators we'd like to invite Billy Streicher to say hello to us.

I just want you to all realize that this is the volunteer fire service that we all love throughout New York State. They dedicate hours and hours and they are not paid. They do the service of the work that the people don't want to do. When people are running away from emergencies, they're running into them. A lot of them served as ex-chiefs, which means they've gone through the ranks throughout their communities and served from a lieutenant to a captain to -- to chief, assistant chief and thereon. A lot of us have become commissioners over the years because we've dedicated our lives to volunteering in our communities to protect life and property.

I would wish that the Speaker would also extend to them the cordialities of the home [sic] and thank them for their service.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On behalf of Mr. DeStefano, the Speaker and all the members, we welcome you members of the volunteer firefighters. We extend the privileges of the floor. Thank you so very much for all of the services you do for our communities. Having over ten volunteer fire departments in my own district, I understand all of the work, hard work and efforts you do for our communities. So thank you for your service and thank you very much for joining us today.

(Applause)

Ms. Zinerman for the purposes of an introduction.

MS. ZINERMAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Good afternoon, colleagues. I know we have a lot of introductions, but Brooklyn today is definitely in the House. I rise to introduce you all to five young people in my -- in my -- in Central Brooklyn because not all of them are in my district, who are part of a civic engagement program called Power Up: Youth Leading Change. For the last three months on the fourth Saturday of the month, they have gathered together to learn how our New York State budget works, to learn about the legislative process. And they are here today, their first lobby day, to speak to legislators throughout the State of New York about their thoughts on the cell phone ban, about involuntary commitment, about free lunch and free CUNY, and they had the opportunity this morning to not only talk to the Lieutenant Governor, but some of our colleagues.

So, Madam Speaker, I ask that you extend the cordialities of the floor and welcome Samuel Bivens, Kayler Scott, Legacy Lewis, Zoe Douglas-Skinner and Nicholas Prince to the People's House.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On behalf of Ms. Zinerman, the Speaker and all members, we welcome you young people to the Assembly Chamber, extend the privileges of the floor to you. Congratulations on your very first advocacy day. We hope to see you back here again really soon. Thank you again so very much for joining us.

(Applause)

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes for the purposes of an introduction.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of Jonathan Rivera and myself and all of us who come from the great City of Buffalo, I would like to introduce and ask you to give them the cordialities of our House to Casimiro Rodriguez from the Hispanic Heritage Council, and Evan Finnigan, who is working with the Hispanic Heritage (inaudible). These folks are doing great work in the City of Buffalo and we're glad to have them in the People's House.

So would you please welcome them and give them the cordialities of the floor. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Yes, ma'am.

On behalf of Mrs. Peoples-Stokes, Mr. Rivera, the Speaker and all the members, we welcome you distinguished gentleman from the Hispanic Heritage Council. We welcome you to the Chamber, extend the privileges of the floor to you. Thank you so very much for joining us today.

(Applause)

Resolutions, page 3, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 251, Mr. O'Pharrow.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 2025 [sic], as Medal of Honor Day

in the State of New York, in conjunction with the observance of National Medal of Honor Day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. O'Pharrow on the resolution.

MR. O'PHARROW: Good afternoon, Madam Speaker; good afternoon, colleagues and guests. Today is a deeply meaningful occasion for me as I proudly introduce my first resolution and to commemorate the Medal of Honor Day in the State of New York.

As a former Navy veteran, the Medal of Honor represents our nation's highest honor for bravery awarded to those who demonstrate extraordinary courage and selflessness in the moments of immense danger. As I introduce my first resolution in this Chamber, I can think of no better way to begin this work than by lifting up courage and sacrifice to those who gave everything for our proud nation.

First awarded in 1863, the Medal of Honor symbolizes courage, sacrifice and unwavering dedication to our nation's core values. March 25th is especially a significant day, as it marks the anniversary of the first Medal of Honor presentation, providing the perfect opportunity and the background to honor these extraordinary men and women.

Today's resolution is not merely symbolic. It reflects our sincere gratitude to men and women of this country who bravely risk their lives. Not for recognition, though, but for the profound

loyalty to their fellow service members and their dedication to our country. Let today remind us that courage is not absence of fear, but the determination to act honorably despite it.

I invite you to take the time to learn more about these inspiring acts and valor demonstrated by these Medal of Honor recipients. Together, united as one, let's ensure today serves as a meaningful beginning, strengthening our commitment to honoring courage, resilience and sacrifice. But let's cultivate our community that profoundly respects and appreciates our nation's heroes.

And, Madam Speaker, thank you for your service. Thank you for all of our service for all of our colleagues, those who served our nation profoundly. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Manktelow on the resolution.

MR. MANKTELOW: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On the resolution. First of all, I want to thank Assemblyman O'Pharrow for bringing this resolution forward. I want to also thank you for your service to the Navy as well.

It's hard to believe that today is National Medal of Honor [sic]. As we celebrate it and remember these men and one woman, the only woman in history to receive the Medal of Honor - her name was Dr. Mary Edwards Walker - back during the Civil War time. But what brought this to my mind today was this morning I happened to catch an interview on television, and it goes back to the courage that some of these Medal of Honor winners have had and will

have and what it means to them. I'm talking about Second Class Donald E. Ballard. He was in the United States Navy as a corpsman. He was assigned to M Company [sic], Third [sic] Battalion, 4th Marines in Vietnam, and on the date of May 16, 1968 he did his heroic act that ultimately earned him the Medal of Honor. What he did was that day they had been in a firefight and he was working on six United States Marines. And while doing so, someone lobbed a grenade into where they -- they were. And without thinking, this individual threw his body on that grenade. Very fortunate for all of them, that grenade did not go off. But this morning when the individual that was interviewing him said, *Why did you do it* -- and what we talk about here really meant a lot to me -- and what he said was he did it because he loved them. He loved those U.S. Marines because of who they were, where they were and because he loved his country and he loved the families back here.

So, Madam Speaker, thank you allowing me to say a few words on this. And today in Arlington, Texas we are opening up the National Museum of the Medal of Honor. So if you get to Texas, please stop by and take a look at it. So again, thank you for allowing me to say a few words. God bless these men and the one woman who received the Medal of Honor and their families. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Maher on the resolution.

MR. MAHER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I again

want to commend our colleague for putting together this resolution. For me, I wanted to take a few minutes to talk about an individual that I've had the honor of working with, and that is Medal of Honor recipient Kyle Carpenter; a Marine and the youngest living Medal of Honor recipient at age 35 was wounded in Afghanistan. And this individual, without hesitation, jumped on a live grenade to protect his fellow Marine and that grenade went off. And Kyle Carpenter, due to the medical staff and their amazing treatment, his life was saved. They actually had to take care of him through prosthetics and rebuilding him in a way that probably couldn't have existed decades ago. And now this is an individual who works to serve his community and other veterans by helping to reintegrate them back into society. And his saying is something that I find to be extremely inspiring, and -- and it came from a conversation of someone coming up to him and saying, "Thank you for your service." Without thinking, his response was, "You are worth it." What a unique response. And that has been his mantra, to let folks know -- especially other service members, but even those that did not serve -- his sacrifice was worth it because of each of the people that he encounters. It speaks to his work, his character, and I am honored to have the opportunity to mention his name and to be part of this resolution.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Angelino on the resolution.

MR. ANGELINO: Madam Speaker, on the

resolution. On Medal of Honor Day in New York State, I want to tell my colleagues and anybody who is listening of Lieutenant Charles Conway Hartigan from Norwich, New York. He -- he and I graduated from high school together about 100 years apart. But this man earned his Medal of Honor in the Spanish-American War at the Battle of Vera Cruz for conspicuous gallantry under heavy gunfire. And this man certainly deserves recognition in a small town, and I guess this message is to the City of Norwich that we're just waiting to name a bridge after this Medal of Honor recipient.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Burke on the resolution.

MR. BURKE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to recognize the first person to receive the Medal of Honor from the Iraq War, the first living person, is a gentleman from -- from Buffalo, Western New York. David Bellavia showed tremendous courage in the face of severe enemy -- dangerous enemy fire where the rest of his troop was trapped and he took it upon himself to put his life in harm's way and saved his brothers and sisters in arms.

So, thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. McDonald on the resolution.

MR. MCDONALD: Thank you, Mr. -- Madam Speaker, excuse me. And I want to thank our colleague for sponsoring this resolution. Ironically, earlier today colleagues here in



the Assembly as well as in the Senate, in a bipartisan manner, gathered here in Albany to remember and recognize Sergeant Henry -- Sergeant Henry Johnson, an Albanian resident who in World War I was part of the 369th that served our country.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about him for a second. This gentleman loved his country, and he wanted to serve it in the most meaningful way. Back then in World War I, he was part of the 369th which was a Black unit that was dispatched to France in World War I. During that unfortunate war, he, on his own, with his buddy were stuck in a foxhole. Twenty Germans started to attack them, and individually he fought every single one of them and made a huge difference in regards to saving his battalion. He was recognized by the French immediately for his valor and his efforts, but unfortunately, in America it took up until 2015 thanks to the efforts of many, including Senator Schumer, where he was finally recognized with his Purple Heart for the 21 stab wounds he had, but also recognized for his Medal of Honor. In a weird twist of fate today, if you went to the U.S. Army website where he was recognized, his information sadly has been taken down for review. We don't know what that means. It's very concerning for us. It's also important to note that this gentleman, because of his acts, Fort Port [sic] was changed to Fort Johnson to recognize him. This gentleman was truly a war hero, a person that we should remember, and I am hoping that the Department of Defense finishes its review, for whatever reason it is, and restores his name on the U.S. Army website for his

contributions and service to our country.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Palmesano on the resolution.

MR. PALMESANO: Yes, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the sponsor for bringing this resolution forward, a fitting resolution. I just wanted to share a story. I was a staff person at the time back in 2004 when Corporal Jason Dunham of Scio, New York in Allegheny County. We heard stories of people who were jumping -- what he did is he jumped with his helmet over -- there was a grenade that was tossed into a pile of Marines, to a number of Marines. He jumped on top of the grenade with his helmet underneath him, and the explosion went off. Unfortunately, Corporal Dunham succumbed to those injuries eight days later. That was April 22, 2004. He was just 22 years old. On January 11, 2007, President George W. Bush presented posthumously to his parents, Dan and Deb Dunham, at the White House for that ultimate sacrifice that he provided to his fellow Marines.

So I just wanted to mention his name today because I remember that as a young staff person back then, and that ripple effect it had through our community. And also, working as a -- for a member of Congress at the time after that, too. So I just want to remember Corporal Jason Dunham, who was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Hawley on the resolution.

MR. HAWLEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to echo the comments by Mr. Burke relative to David Bellavia. David is from my district, lives in Livonia in Orleans County, and has a very popular call-in radio show on WBEN in Buffalo. He served in the United States Army, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Second Battle of Fallujah. Bellavia has also received the Bronze Star, two Army Commendation Medals, two Army Achievement Medals and the New York State Conspicuous Service Cross.

In 2005, Bellavia was inducted into the New York Veterans Hall of Fame, and he has subsequently been involved in politics in Western New York and upon being awarded the Medal of Honor on June 25, 2019, Bellavia became the first and currently only living recipient of the Medal of Honor for his service during the Iraq War. I'd like to thank not only Mr. Bellavia, but every veteran who has served during any time of service. We're in the minority relative to serving our country, and I think we all need to show our support for veterans not only on this day and for this resolution, but every single day. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, would

you please call the Rules Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Rules Committee immediately in the Speaker's Conference Room. Rules Committee to the Speaker's Conference Room.

Resolutions, page 3, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 252, Mr. Lemondes.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim February 2025, as Lamb Lovers Month in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Lemondes on the resolution.

MR. LEMONDES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As we celebrate Lamb Lovers Month this February in accordance with the American Lamb's Board "Ewe Complete Me" --- that's E-W-E -- "Ewe Complete Me" campaign, let me say a few things about this superb-tasting, highly nutritious meat source of which New York ranks among the top 20 sheep-producing states in the nation, having 2,100 sheep farms.

First, the story of the sheep itself is simple. No other animal has provided more comfort to mankind than sheep. They have been there by our sides since the dawn of time. Not only as a food source for meat and dairy products, but also for their fiber, which is wool for clothing, insulation and fertilizer, believe it or not, and a host

of other applications. As the most efficient ruminant animal, sheep turn the least amount of inputs into the greatest amount of dense, rich protein available. Sheep are truly at the intersection of where nutritious meets delicious. Lamb meat also contains the highest amount of conjugated linoleic acid, or CLA, which is a highly beneficial fatty acid that aids in the promotion of fat loss, is an anticarcinogen, and provides a host of other significantly positive health and nutritional benefits.

Lamb is also the least understood protein source available to us in the U.S. So, buy lamb, eat lamb, love lamb. It's sustainable, tastes great, it's good for you and is locally produced all over New York State and throughout our nation. And celebrate American Lamb. Five million head of lamb in the U.S. approximately right now as we speak.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 253, Mr. Ramos.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim March 25, 2025, as Day for the Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Ramos on the

resolution.

MR. RAMOS: Madam Speaker, on the resolution. Today we gather to reflect on one of our nation's greatest sins as we take up this resolution to proclaim March 25, 2025 the Day of [sic] Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade in New York State. This day stands as a solemn acknowledgement of the historical significance and the enduring impact of the transatlantic slave trade. It is a moment to honor the resilience of the victims and their descendants while reaffirming our commitment to combatting racism and prejudice.

Many times we stand here and we -- we debate issues about immigration and immigrant rights, and many times absent from that conversation is a group of immigrants who when they came to this country didn't get to see that majestic lady in New York Harbor with the torch in her hand, and the reason is that they were chained to the bottom of ships. The transatlantic slave trade remains the largest forced migration in history, forcibly displacing 15 million Africans across -- across for four centuries. Despite the unimaginable suffering, torture and dehumanization they endured, these enslaved Africans endured and persevered. Their strength and resilience live on through their descendants who have profoundly shaped our culture and continues to enrich our nation. Many of their descendants serve right here in this Body.

Let us remember these lessons of history so that we may reflect on the consequences of this sin. We must remain vigilant

against the brutality, unjust -- injustice that humans can actually inflict on each other. We hear efforts and we see efforts from our Federal Government to erase this history. To not want to teach it so that we, as a nation, don't realize the mistakes that we made and do not repeat them. And they're banning books in certain states here. From the Federal Government, they're removing any reference to this atrocity that took centuries of victimhood -- that inflicted victimhood for centuries against people. In an era when division is often sewn to make neighbors and coworkers see each other as others, we need to reflect on these things and we need -- need to be united. You see, those -- those who have that hateful rhetoric coming from Washington realize that a united nation cannot be conquered, so they must divide us; Black against white, LGBT against non-LGBT, Muslims against the rest of U.S. citizens. They have to find some way to divide us in order to conquer. And in this history here, we must preserve it and we must recognize it and we must never repeat it.

We are all children of God, deserving of dignity, respect and understanding. We know all too well that in the eyes of oppressors -- of the oppressors, a slave with a book was more dangerous than a slave with a gun. And that is why we see even today disparities in education and education used as a way to oppress and to marginalize certain communities. This fear was borne from the undeniable power of knowledge. Even as enslaved Africans were stripped of their humanity, the oppressors understood the transformative force of education. And that's why we see elements in

our educational system today that create a divide. The fact that our education is funded by homeowners -- primarily by homeowners who pay home taxes, and in a poorer community the homes are worth less, so there's less of a tax base for the minority students to learn. And it's write -- written right into the law how -- how education is used to marginalize communities of color.

May New York remain the beacon of justice, education and truth, committed to preserving our past and to forge a brighter future for generations to come. On this day of remembrance, we pay tribute to the immeasurable contribution of African descendants across the Americas -- the Americas. Their resilience, culture and legacy continue to shape our society and inspire progress. May we honor the memory by embracing justice, not erasing it, pursuing knowledge and ensuring that the full story of our shared history, which Black history is American history, is never, ever forgotten.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

(Applause)

Mr. -- Ms. Zinerman on the resolution.

MS. ZINERMAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in strong support of this resolution and with deep reverence for the significance of this day, March 25th, the International Day of Remembrance of Victims of the Transatlantic Slave Trade [sic].

It is providence today that we were joined in



Chambers by students who are enrolled in the AP African-American History program, young scholars who are not just learning about their history, but they are also teaching us. They will be the generation that will help uncover the truth of our shared American history, a history too long buried, too often distorted, and too rarely taught in our schools.

I stand before you as a proud descendant four generations out of the enslavement. The legacy of that brutal system lives in our institutions, in our communities and even in our laws. But so, too, does the resilience, brilliance and unbreakable spirit of the people who survived it and their descendants who continue to build this nation.

As we pass this reso -- resolution, let us remember that remembrance alone is not enough. The United Nations declared 2015 to 2024 the International Decade for People of African Descent, calling on the world to advance recognition, justice and the development for people of African descent. That decade is ending, but the work must not. I urge my colleagues today to learn about this decade, to learn about this history, and join me in championing a second decade for people of African descent that was declared by the U.N. in November of 2024, in policy, in education, in economic investment, and in the full recognition of our humanity and our contributions. Let us honor those lost not just with words, but with the action. Let us fund the truth, let us commit to equity, and let us never forget.

Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 254, Mr. McDonald.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim October 2025, as Spina Bifida Awareness Month in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly Resolution No. 255, Mr. Sayegh.

Legislative Resolution memorializing Governor Kathy Hochul to proclaim November 28, 2025, as Albanian-American Heritage Day in the State of New York.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Sayegh in -- on the resolution.

MR. SAYEGH: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise again today this year for this annual resolution that celebrates Albanian-American Heritage Day in New York State. That day, November 28th, is the 113 years [sic] anniversary of Albanian independence from the Ottoman Empire, which took place on November 28, 1912. And I'd like as a proud member representing the

City of Yonkers, New York, the third-largest city in the State, to attribute to a lot of our economic growth and success to a strong and vibrant Albanian-American community. There exists presently nearly a half-a-million Albanian-Americans in New York State, and the community has shown its strength in economics, in real estate, education, business, and most recently in my city, playing a key role in law enforcement, many police officers and others that help us maintain one of the safest crime rates of any big city in the State.

So today I'd like to rise to again congratulate and wish our Albanian-American communities across New York State a very joyous, healthy and happy Albanian-American Heritage Day. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Zaccaro on the resolution.

MR. ZACCARO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today with great pride to celebrate Albanian [sic] Heritage Day and to honor the profound contributions of the Albanian community here in New York.

It is truly an honor to represent a district that is home to one of the most largest and most vibrant Albanian communities in the State. This community not only enriched our Borough of the Bronx, but has strengthened the very fabric of our shared experience. The Albanian people have brought with them a rich culture and a deep sense of heritage and an unwavering commitment to unity that has made all of us stronger. And I stand on the shoulders of those who

have paved the way before me, particularly Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj, who made history as the first Albanian-American to serve in elected office here in the State of New York. His legacy, along with the efforts of many others in our community like my very own Chief-of-Staff Ornela Beshiri and my district leader Ardhimir Malziu, continue to inspire me and the countless others who strive to serve and uplift our neighborhoods.

My district, Madam Speaker, is a shining example of the very best that Albania has to offer. A place where the values of hard work and resilience and community are embedded in our daily lives. The Albanian community in the Bronx is a testament to the power of selflessness, the strength of unity and the dedication to the greater good that we should all strive for. On Albanian Heritage Day, we join together with communities across the world to honor the history, the culture and the resilience of the Albanian people. November 28th marks a pivotal moment in history when Albania declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912, reclaiming its sovereignty, its freedom and its national identity. And this day is not just a celebration of the past, but a tribute to the 113 years of strength, perseverance, and the pride that the Albanian people have shown in defending their freedom and their heritage. From the legendary warriors who fought for independence, to the thriving Albanian diaspora that continues to contribute today, their traditions, their language and their cultural pride remain as vibrant and enduring as ever. And as we celebrate this important day in the People's House,

we reflect on the sacrifices of those who came before us, and we look towards the future of unity, of progress and growth. A future that honors the resilience of the Albanian community and the enduring bond that they share with our communities.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank my colleague for bringing this resolution to the floor.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

On the resolution, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolution is adopted.

Mr. Morinello for the purposes of an introduction.

MR. MORINELLO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really happy to introduce my cousin, Joe Certo, who prefers to be called Giuseppe Certo. My mother and his father are siblings. They were in the family business together for 102 years, starting with my grandfather. He decided it was time to come and just see how Albany works.

So I ask Madam Speaker to afford him the courtesies of the House and welcome him to the New York State Assembly.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On behalf of Mr. Morinello, the Speaker and all the members, we welcome you. Always love to see family members attending the Chamber, extend the privileges of the floor to you. We hope you enjoy our proceedings today. Thank you so very much for traveling to join us. Thank you.

(Applause)

Page 8, Calendar No. 31, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A01572, Calendar No. 31, Weprin, Otis. An act to amend the Insurance Law, in relation to requiring the Superintendent of Financial Service to promulgate regulations which provide standardized definitions for commonly-used terms and phrases in certain insurance policies.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: An explanation has been requested, Mr. Weprin.

MR. WEPRIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This bill amends Section 3425 and 3426 of the Insurance Law to require the Superintendent of Financial Services to promulgate regulations which provide standardized definitions for commonly-used terms and phrases found in homeowners policies and commercial line policies that provide coverage for loss or damage to real property, personal property or other liabilities for loss or damage to property. This bill was written after the Committee conducted a hearing and several roundtables, examining the insurance issues that arose following Superstorm Sandy. One of those issues that came out of these forums is that people are often confused by what is in their homeowners and commercial policies, in part because different policies define the same terms and phrases differently. This bill would address this by ensuring that policies contain standardized terms and phrases.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Ra.

MR. RA: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the sponsor yield?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor

yield?

MR. WEPRIN: Yes, I will.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MR. RA: Thank you. And excuse my back --

MR. WEPRIN: That's all right.

MR. RA: We're sitting -- we're -- we sit so close to each other. So I know we've had this bill come to the floor in the past, and there's been some concerns raised both with the delegation of this level of authority to the Department of Financial Services and also how this might impact, you know, the ability to provide coverage, you know, in a very wide variety of situations. So I want to start with this, though. My understanding is that there is a lot of judicial precedent in this area, and one of the things that is required or -- or the precedent basically states is that any ambiguities must be read in favor of the policyholder. So I guess generally speaking, what is the need for a bill like this that will have the Department of Financial Services go and define all of these terms?

MR. WEPRIN: Well, this came up at the hearing, and there -- there is a -- a lack of understanding specifically in certain terms that were used that hopefully standardizing them with the Department of Financial Services will -- will clear up.

MR. RA: So as I mentioned, commercial policyholders, you know, may have unique insurance needs. Would this standardization of term -- terminologies inhibit consumer choice by implementing essentially a one-size-fits-all approach so that term

needs to mean the same thing for every business, every insurance company?

(Pause)

MR. WEPRIN: The answer is -- the short answer is no, but this bill permits alternative definitions for these terms as long as such definitions are just as favorable to the policyholder as determined by the Superintendent. This would allow customization in policies where it is needed.

MR. RA: The -- so in the use of an alternative definition, and I know that's -- there's language at the end of each of the two sections here. But it says "as determined by the Superintendent." So if a company were to use an alternative definition, how does that work? Are they -- do they have to go to the Superintendent of Financial Services prior to the utilization and say, *This is how we're defining it* and then the Superintendent determines whether it is, you know, more favorable to the policyholder?

MR. WEPRIN: It would be a discussion with the Department of Financial Services and -- and they would, you know, make the decision. But as you pointed out at the beginning of your remarks, it would have to be just as favorable to the policyholders, if not better.

MR. RA: Okay. And then one of the other things that has come up is that oftentimes if an insurance policy is silent on a certain term, brokers have some leverage to advocate for the coverage of claims which may not be explicitly protected. How would this bill



deal with that ability for an insurance broker to advocate for -- for the coverage holder?

MR. WEPRIN: It would not interfere with that.

MR. RA: Now, the concern I raised at the outset is, you know, the idea of the Department of Financial Services really I -- I think taking over I would say two roles here that currently may lie elsewhere. One is I think we're delegating an awful lot of what should be legislative authority to them, but also, essentially they are becoming part of the process of drafting an insurance contract. That normally is -- is left to the business and -- and two parties that need to come together on coverage. So are we delegating to them to essentially become, you know, almost an underwriter or a drafter of -- of an insurance contract?

MR. WEPRIN: No, this is not unlike other regulations the DFS has about how policies are written, such as the read -- readability requirements or standardization of certain aspects of the policy. This is an effort to provide consistency and clarify to consumers and policyholders, which is part of DFS' role as a regulator of the insurance industry.

MR. RA: I -- I might argue that. As -- as you just said, we do have a requirement under Section 3102(c) of the Insurance Law regarding readability requirements, which I -- I would argue renders, you know, a bill like this somewhat redundant and unnecessary. But again, the last piece I -- I mentioned, you know, isn't it common now that, say, if we had to deal with a situation where

there was a term that we thought was not, you know, being properly utilized and it -- and it was hurting the market, that it would be maybe our responsibility to put together a bill that could become a statute to address it as opposed to delegating a wide array of responsibility for what I think is a legislative function to the Department of Financial Services?

(Pause)

MR. WEPRIN: It would -- it would just allow for a clarification and input from the industry and the policyholders' insurance company.

MR. RA: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Weprin.

Madam Speaker, on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. RA: So, I -- I just want to, you know, reiterate first that last point. You know, this is a tremendous delegation of authority that I think we should be exercising as elected legislators in this Body and our colleagues down the hall. We're -- we're saying to an Executive agency that they're going to define all these terms, they're gonna make determinations that should be made between two contracting parties and we're not really putting guardrails or a lot of parameters around it. We're -- we're delegating an awful lot of authority here to -- to that agency. I, for one, am often frustrated with some of the actions I see coming out of our agencies, so I am not comfortable with that. But I also want to -- want to reiterate: We have current provisions in law that require contracts to be readable,

common language so that people can understand what's in them. And we also have 100-plus years of court precedent dealing in this area that could be completely rendered unsettled by a bill like this that now allows the Department of Financial Services to define all of these terms. And lastly, I would again say, you know, the precedent requires that when there's an ambiguity it must be read in favor of the policyholder and against the insurance company. So our case law, our current statutory system protects policyholders in a great way, and if we think that we need to do more with regard to laws we should do it here, not delegate that authority to the Department of Financial Services.

For those reasons I'm going to be voting in the negative. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mr. Blankenbush.

MR. BLANKENBUSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

On the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. BLANKENBUSH: I'm -- I'm gonna -- I'm gonna read exactly what comes right out of the Insurance Law, and it -- and it currently says this: *Requires all personal line insurance policies to be readably required -- to meet readability -- readability requirements. Such requirements mandate that the policies be written in a clear, coherent manner and use words with common and*

*everyday meanings to facilitate readability in order to assist the policyholder in understanding the coverages provided.*

Now, if I remember right for years ago we voted on this common readable language that was to go into Insurance Law. The second thing is when you're talking commercial lines. When -- when you're sitting down -- for those of you that don't know, I've been in the insurance business almost my whole adult life -- but when you're sitting down talking with a commercial lines client, every business that you sit down with is unique and different. If you standardized everything that's coming out of the -- of DFS and it doesn't fit into a -- into a current policy that a commercial lines individual needs, it's gonna be hard to cover that individual business for exactly what they need. So standardizing is -- is -- sounds good, but it really isn't gonna work well with commercial lines. As a matter of fact, we've been told that some policyholders, if this is going to be in effect, would likely to self insure, purchase coverage offshore, pursue other risk management options that fall outside, outside the regulatory -- regulatory authorities that DFS has. This -- this could cause consequences that we really don't want to see in the State of New York.

So if you look at the personal lines definitions of readable language, if you look at the -- the unique possibilities of writing commercial lines business in the State of New York, standardizing is not the way to go. And so I would recommend that -- a no vote on this -- on this legislation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: A Party vote has been requested.

Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minority Conference will be in the negative on this piece of legislation, but if any member wishes to vote otherwise they may do so at their seat. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Majority Conference is generally gonna be in favor of this piece of legislation; however, should one decide that they would like to be in opposition they should feel free to do so at their seats. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Mr. Weprin to explain his vote.

MR. WEPRIN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Once this bill becomes law, if it should become law, the Department of Financial Services will promulgate regulations and there will be plenty of comment period to address some of the issues that were

raised as far as standardized definition.

So I withdraw my request and vote in the affirmative.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Weprin in the affirmative.

Mr. Hawley to explain his vote.

MR. HAWLEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just briefly, having the Department of Financial Services write and promulgate the actual language is all fine and well, but no one - not you, Mr. Weprin, not the Superintendent of Financial Services - no one here is going to require or be able to require that people who have homeowners insurance or commercial lines insurance are actually gonna read the policy. My guess, after years of being in the business, is that less than 10 percent and probably far less than that actually read their policies or understand it. It requires an agent, it requires the company, and it requires others who have knowledge in the business to be able to do that.

So I, too, will be voting against this. It's all well and good, sir, but people don't read their policies. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Hawley in the negative.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes to explain her vote.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to explain my vote. I will note that my colleague during the course of this debate has said more than once that

the Department of Financial Services will promulgate the rules, and obviously then there's a public process that it has to go through. We're right now witnessing in our country a gentleman who is not elected and is making all kind of changes as it relates to how citizens are treated, and no one's watching him. No one's given a second opportunity to say is this right or is this not right. At least the Senate does confirm the Department of Service -- Financial Services director, and the people will have an opportunity to weigh in once she comes up with the rules that she wants to promulgate.

So thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I appreciate my colleague for introducing this bill yet again. We have discussed this one in the past before, and -- and I hope that we will move forward with this one this time for real. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you. Mrs. Peoples-Stokes in the affirmative.

Ms. Walsh to explain her vote.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, specifically on this piece of legislation and confining my comments to that, I would say that when DFS comes out with its own language, that could then turn into the need to promulgate completely new forms, a lot of new forms, potentially. Insurers will have to rewrite many of these forms and contracts that have already been approved previously. That would be expensive and burdensome to insurance companies.

And while there's very often not a lot of sympathy for

insurance companies, I will express that sympathy and I will be voting in the negative. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you. Ms. Walsh in the negative.

Are there any other votes? The Clerk will announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Page 8, Calendar No. 26, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A00612, Calendar No. 26, Hevesi, Meeks, Epstein, Slater, Eachus, Maher, Brabenec, Lunsford. An act to amend the Social Services Law, in relation to the appropriate staff/child ratios for family day care homes, group family day care homes, school-age day care programs and day care centers.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: An explanation has been requested, Mr. Hevesi.

MR. HEVESI: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good afternoon, my colleagues, Ms. Walsh. This bill will allow the Office of Children of Family Services to adjust stringent staff/child ratios for child care programs, which will enable providers to admit more students without having to hire more staff.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: Madam Speaker, will the sponsor yield?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor



yield?

MR. HEVESI: It would be my pleasure. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.

MS. WALSH: I just have a few questions for you today. Could you just state why again that this bill is being brought forward?

MR. HEVESI: Sure. Absolutely. And thank you, Ms. Walsh. In order to address our child care crisis in New York State, we've heard from our providers out of New York City. So this -- this bill is designed to benefit our child care providers outside of New York City.

In 2000, the Office of Children and Family Services promulgated staffing ratios. So for example, if you're a toddler -- if you have toddlers in your class you have to have one staff per six kids. In New York City, the Department of Health, the New York City Department of Health has the same kind of ratios but has it as a one-to-five level. So it's one staff person for five kids. Seeing that we believe kids are the same in New York City and Upstate, we believe that Upstate should be able to use the higher standard of ratio which will allow them to -- the providers take in more kids and financially it will be a boon to our Upstate child care providers.

MS. WALSH: Well, it's interesting because you just talked about a higher standard of ratio, but really what you're doing is you're allowing more kids per staff member, right?

MR. HEVESI: Yeah.

MS. WALSH: So what -- but, I mean, couldn't you look at that as actually lowering the standards for our kids?

MR. HEVESI: You could, if they're -- and -- and you're right. So in 2000 when this regulation was put in -- into place, the logic was we're not gonna have any standards lower than this. That was 25 years ago. What we didn't foresee was a time now when we have consensus from the New York City Department of Health and the Office and Children and Family Services who wrote this bill, what happened is my colleague in the Senate went to the OCFS and said, *Listen, our Upstate providers should be allowed to care for more kids and not have to hire more staff.* OCFS said, *Okay, here's the bill language.* That's the bill before you, it just strikes out the old regulation. So we're gonna allow the Upstate to provide us to care for more kids.

MS. WALSH: I see what it says. I mean, but my question is why would we want a less stringent staff-to-child ratio than 25 years ago? You know, have the needs of children decreased during that time? Has there been such an improvement in the delivery of services to children that we don't need as many staff? I mean, I understand that it's difficult to attract and retain staff, and -- and certainly we feel that Upstate, no question about it. But I'm concerned and I think some people might be concerned that in the name of problems with retention and attraction of staff that we might be potentially compromising the care of our kids.

MR. HEVESI: Yeah, no, it's -- it's a legitimate point.

Let me tell why I'm comfortable that we're not doing that.

MS. WALSH: Okay.

MR. HEVESI: First, our child care professionals have grown in expertise over the last 25 years. They are educators, they're not just child care providers taking care of kids. So that's number one. And number two, I wouldn't have brought this bill before the House if there wasn't unanimity that the one-to-five ratio in New York City is -- is -- I'm sorry, one-to-six ratio in New York City keeps kids safe. We haven't had any incidents in New York City, and I would like our Upstate providers to be benefitting from the same financial benefits of the staff ratio.

MS. WALSH: And I guess the next question really kind of ties in with an earlier debate, the preceding debate about who sets the standards. You mentioned this was an OCFS bill, that they had come forward with it. But why do you wanna have OCFS set the standard rather than having them set out in bill text by the Legislature? Because doesn't this just empower OCFS to set a new standard?

MR. HEVESI: Well, that's an interesting question. So -- so OCFS already promulgates the regulations. They do that pro forma. And by the way, they're the experts. So, you know, with respect -- great respect to us and our colleagues, I don't have medical professionals on staff to tell me what's the appropriate ratio. So we have historically farmed it out to OCFS and I still it's the appropriate place.

MS. WALSH: In the -- in the sponsor's -- in your bill memo it states that there's no financial impact to this legislation, but how can that be true?

MR. HEVESI: There's no financial impact to the State. So I apologize if the memo is not (inaudible). None to the State, but this will be a great financial impact to the Upstate providers who are desperate for this.

MS. WALSH: Yeah, I understand that point. But as the New York Public Welfare Association stated in its memo of concern, there's no way to mandate staffing ratios on anything without a financial impact. Won't there be additional cost as more children enter these programs and who will pay? Sure, you know, some parents will pay but won't the counties be also on the hook?

MR. HEVESI: Can I ask you a question? Is that NYPWA memo? That's a --

MS. WALSH: I don't know if it was actually a written -- it -- it's noted in my memo that they have a concern. It might have been oral.

MR. HEVESI: Because -- because I hadn't heard that. That's an interesting question. So -- so look, we find ourselves in a specific situation here where child care across the State is in danger. I'm gonna go off topic just a tiny bit to let you know down in New York City we're finding a budget shortfall, and some of my Upstate counties as well, because we're growing, which is exactly what you want, and we have to continue to -- to accommodate that.

CSEA, which supports this bill, tells us that 70 percent of our child day care centers are at max capacity, and our home care, 50 percent of our home care at max capacity. So while we are waiting, and I -- not in this budget, unfortunately, but I'm hoping in the next budget we're gonna really infuse million -- billions of dollars into the child care workforce, which is what you need to expand as a stopgap measure to help our local providers stay in business for that time frame. This is something we all agree that we can do without sacrificing any safety for our children.

MS. WALSH: So do you see this more as a stopgap measure or do you see this as something that would be permanent moving forward?

MR. HEVESI: Permanent. It's good -- I shouldn't have said stop -- it's permanent. It's just good public policy. But the timing is we're doing it now in anticipation -- so if it was up to me, the budget discussions we would be having would be about a \$1.2 billion workforce and increasing slots. That's not the conversation we're having for a variety of reasons. So in anticipation of that happening in the next year, we started collectively looking around, *Hey, how do we help our providers stay in business* and this is a mechanism that we thought would work.

MS. WALSH: Okay. So, to -- just -- just so that I'm clear, I apologize, maybe I missed it, but my question earlier was would counties be responsible for paying for some of this --

MR. HEVESI: No.

MS. WALSH: -- if there are more children coming in? So -- and -- and I'm just trying to understand this, because under the Child Care Assistance Program, so CCAP --

MR. HEVESI: CCAP.

MS. WALSH: -- CCAP. Okay. It's administered by local social services districts, it helps eligible families with children between six weeks and 13 years old pay for child care, and that OCFS oversees CCAP and provides funding to counties through child care block grants.

MR. HEVESI: Correct.

MS. WALSH: Okay. So does the county have no share in that at all?

MR. HEVESI: Yeah, no, it's a good question. But those are for vouchers, right? So -- so what you're talking about is a State share and a county share of -- of vouchers. This bill doesn't touch the vouchers, we're just letting more kids come to Upstate providers without going near the voucher process.

MS. WALSH: Okay. All right.

MR. HEVESI: Does that make sense?

MS. WALSH: Thank you very much for answering my questions.

MR. HEVESI: Thank you, Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: I appreciate it.

Madam Speaker, very briefly on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MS. WALSH: You know, of course we want to see child care programs succeed in our State. We know that they've been struggling financially and also in trying to attract and retain staff. I'm sure all of us have been hearing about that. Some of us might be concerned, however, that we could be sacrificing some quality standards in the process. And, you know, I -- I do think that if this Body wants to change ratios, we should just put it in the legislation with an accurate idea of the cost to the counties, if ever. I do appreciate the sponsor's answers to my questions on that instead of handing it over to OCFS. They may be the experts, but we are the Legislators and I do think that we should have a role more than just simply carrying a bill that they want.

And I -- I would just say in closing that, you know, just because -- I'll pick on California -- just because California does something doesn't mean that New York State should, and just does because New York City does something doesn't necessarily mean that the whole State should.

So we do have some of our members who are -- who are on this bill, who are sponsors of this bill, and I think many of us, as I've said, are very sympathetic to the situation that many child care centers find themselves in. But some of our members may have reservations as well. So thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? The Clerk will announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Page 8, Calendar No. 29, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A01365-A, Calendar No. 29, Paulin, Gibbs, Zinerman, Septimo. An act to amend the Public Health Law, in relation to requiring nursing homes to designate dedicated storage spaces for the storage of the bodies of deceased persons.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: An explanation has been requested, Ms. Paulin.

MS. PAULIN: (Mic off) Okay, thank you. So the purpose of the bill is to require nursing homes to designate dedicated storage spaces for the bodies of deceased residents.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Jensen.

MR. JENSEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Will the sponsor yield for some questions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Will the sponsor yield?

MS. PAULIN: I would be happy to.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The sponsor yields.



MR. JENSEN: You're -- you're very gracious, Ms. Paulin. Was the genesis of this legislation in response to the situation that happened in long-term care facilities during COVID-19?

MS. PAULIN: Yes. Yes, it was.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. In existing State law or DOH regulations, is there already a requirement for these facilities to store temporarily deceased residents until arrangements can be made with a funeral parlor or the county morgue?

MS. PAULIN: Yes, there's already some requirements in the -- in rules and regs. The difference is that what we saw during COVID was that there were many, many deceased bodies that needed to be stored and there wasn't a plan to -- to effectively take care of that. So the remains of -- were in situations that we wouldn't want our loved ones to be in. And so what this bill does is it just requires a plan so that if there is a similar, God forbid, emergency of any sort that there would be a plan in place so that we know this would never happen again.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. And understood. And I think certainly myself and I would imagine a great deal of our colleagues would agree that we do want, you know, in an incident, whether it's a large-scale casualty event like we saw in nursing homes during COVID-19 or -- or any singular death we want, you know, individuals in death to be treated with dignity and respect. Correct me if I'm wrong, but this only comes into play if the Governor declares an emergency declaration. Does it have to be Statewide or for infectious

disease -- what's -- what's the mechanism for --

MS. PAULIN: It's any kind of -- it's an emergency situation that would have an impact in this area, right? So if there was an emergency that had nothing to do with public health, then we wouldn't -- this wouldn't fall into play. But if there was an emergency that was gonna -- an emergency where this would or whether, again, we saw many, many people die in a very short time frame, it would come into play.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. Would nursing homes or other long-term care facilities, would they have to -- they wouldn't have to submit their plan for dealing with a large number of deceased individuals until the declaration is made, correct?

MS. PAULIN: Correct.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. So what is the determination on whether or not a facility's existing cold storage capabilities are sufficient to deal with the declared public health emergency that may lead to higher than expected deaths?

MS. PAULIN: So you might remember all too well, and maybe not fondly, you know, all of the Executive Orders that were put forward during the COVID nightmare.

MR. JENSEN: Mm-hmm.

MS. PAULIN: And they were very detailed and had a lot of individual requirements on many, many different things, and I would imagine that this would be one of those. So it would describe much more in detail about some of the provisions. This is just a

broader approach, you know, dealing with a problem that we know occurred.

MR. JENSEN: So and -- and I can understand that. But I think one of the things that -- that I'm conscious about is what would the requirement statutorily be for a facility? So say they -- they already have built-in cold storage within their facility that they believe works for what they need and maybe some excess capacity. There's no minimum, you have to have X-amount of square footage for X-amount of beds that you have in your facility. So I guess who would determine -- would it be DOH's responsibility to determine in the time of crisis, in the time of a public health emergency, whether or not the nursing homes across the State or in a generalized location have taken appropriate steps for an indeterminate number of possible deceased they may have to store? I guess, I think this -- there could be an opening that there could be some confusion because there's not -- there's not a mechanism where they know what to expect.

MS. PAULIN: Right. Although, as an emergency goes on, you know, certain gradations could happen. If we saw that the epidemic was happening Downstate or Upstate, conversely DOH could make those judgments. And all this bill really does is you have to have a plan.

MR. JENSEN: Yeah. Well, and -- and --

MS. PAULIN: And leaving it up to the individual nursing home in an individually-designated geographic area, they might be best able to see what's happening. Maybe there are three

nursing homes in a certain community, so they're not gonna see the volume as others might. Maybe this is a disease that's not impacting the kind of population. A nursing home, certainly, with children, you know -- you know, a pediatric nursing home might be different than a -- one for seniors. So I think that by leaving it up a little more flexible, we're giving more control over those people who actually might have that knowledge.

MR. JENSEN: Well, and -- and I -- I certainly understand that. In -- you know, I'll use my own community as an example. In Monroe County, and I'm gonna -- I looked at the numbers recently but I can't remember exactly. But there's 50 some-odd nursing homes within 25 miles of the center of the City of Rochester. So, say in the Monroe County Finger Lakes area there is a public health emergency and you have these 50 some-odd facilities who are all now in the state of emergency, they have to develop this plan, submit it to DOH. While DOH is dealing with the public health emergency, have all those reviewed, and if DOH says, *Well, your plan's not specific enough*, you're gonna have all these facilities either having to compete with outside vendors to enter into contracts for temporary cold storage, which I know a lot of not just nursing homes, but during the COVID pandemic, nursing homes, hospitals, funeral parlors were all competing with a fairly limited amount of vendors who offered appropriate cold storage for dead bodies. Or these facilities would be tasked with engaging in a capital program when they're already trying to deal with a public health emergency that is

causing death. And so I understand the need to have a plan, to be prepared. You should always -- you know, failure to plan is planning to fail. I'm pretty sure I had a teacher tell me that at one point in my life. However, I think that having more statutory discretion saying, *Listen, you know, we understand that this is something that could happen*, but trusting the facilities that they're gonna know based on their bed numbers, based on infection control. Things that this may not be the best course of action, especially when it doesn't have to happen until there's already a declared emergency.

MS. PAULIN: So I will say, you know, what I think a plan does is it creates cooperation among all of those entities that you're pointing to so that, for example, if we know that this particular emergency is not gonna rise to near the numbers that we saw during COVID, but greater than the capacity that a particular nursing home has on hand, they may decide to work with some of their neighboring nursing homes, their neighboring funeral homes, to be able to have the storage that everybody needs in one place. So it just could potentially create a cooperation that we didn't see during COVID.

MR. JENSEN: So -- so I just want to clarify on that. So is it your -- your intent in the legislation that in this -- if this becomes law that a nursing home wouldn't have to necessarily construct new cold storage capabilities, but they could in theory not just contract with an outside vendor, but they could also contract with other medical facilities or with the county health department or the county morgue, medical examiner, to store residents who may have

been deceased off the grounds of the nursing home and they would not have to have them on site, they could move them to an off-site location?

MS. PAULIN: I think that it's -- we're talking about a plan. So we're not talking about any specific thing in the plan, we're talking about the fact that they should have a plan in mind, so -- or a plan on paper, a plan to submit. So, working with others and figuring it out together, it could be that the bodies are so contagious that you wouldn't do that, or -- or that they aren't so that you would have -- you could have a site that's two miles away. Or, you know, I think that all we're saying is that they need to have a plan. And one of the reasons why we say that the plan should be developed after the emergency is declared is because you have a better idea of what kind of emergency it is so that the plan is more specific to that situation and could vary depending on the next emergency and the next kind of situation. So, we just found that there were a lot of nursing homes that were not thinking in a strategic way, and that there were very big problems as a result of that. So this just says you have to have a plan. And then that plan could be cooperating, not cooperating, a storage facility on site. Whatever it is that works.

MR. JENSEN: Okay. I thank the sponsor for her answers and, Madam Speaker, on the bill.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On the bill.

MR. JENSEN: Certainly, I -- I understand and -- and believe and agree with the importance of planning. But oftentimes,

people who are -- are experts in dealing with emergencies say that the best-laid plans in a time of emergency aren't worth the paper they're printed on. And I understand the need, especially in long-term care facilities, to deal with what would happen if they have an excess number of dead bodies. Certainly, you don't want dead bodies laying around. That's a problem for a myriad of reasons. However, I think these facilities are already are the homes for the individuals they serve already have processes in place to deal with what happens with the death of any of their residents who call that facility home. And in the time of a crisis where our public health authorities are already dealing with so many issues to keep the public safe, having them have to review a plan is just gonna add potentially more confusion and more delay in actually addressing the public health crisis that may be. Certainly, we don't want to have facilities in a time of a public health emergency having to build -- you know, build entire new portions of their facility. We -- we're -- we don't want to get into a place where we have vendors who provide this refrigerated storage to be able to price gouge by competing nursing homes versus hospitals versus funeral parlors. So I understand, you know, we want to learn lessons from -- from 2020; however, I think it is important to recognize that jumping to action with the assumption that every emergency is gonna be the same may lead us to potentially having to make decisions in a time of crisis that only make reacting to the crisis more difficult.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect on the 60th day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: A Party vote has been requested.

Ms. Walsh.

MS. WALSH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So, the Minority Conference will generally be in the negative on this piece of legislation but there may be some exceptions, and members can certainly vote differently at their desks. Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Majority Conference is in favor of this piece of legislation.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Thank you.

The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? The Clerk will announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, members have on their desks an A-Calendar and a B-Calendar. I



would like to move to advance those Calendars.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by Mrs. Peoples-Stokes, the A- and B-Calendar are advanced.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

(Pause)

A-Calendar, page 3, Rules Report No. 112.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A01053-A, Rules Report No. 112, Steck, Buttenschon. An act to amend the General Business Law, in relation to the recall of Class B firefighting foam and prohibiting the sale of distribution of firefighting personal protective equipment that contains intentionally-added PFAS; and to repeal certain provisions of such law relating thereto.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? The Clerk will announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A03928-B, Rules

Report No. 113, Bores, Stirpe, Gallagher, Hooks. An act to amend the General Business Law, in relation to automatic renewals, continuous service offers and automatic subscription renewals.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect on the 180th day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Mr. Bores to explain his vote.

MR. BORES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. All of us have had the experience of signing up for a trial or a subscription, planning to cancel it or -- or intending to cancel and having trouble doing that or simply forgetting about it, and these costs build on New Yorkers over time. We have heard loud and clear from our constituents that they're worried about the cost of living, and this is a commonsense proposal to make sure that we don't accidentally get charged for more than what we're intending to.

I'm very proud to have worked with my colleagues across the aisle and had this passed unanimously through three committees already, as well as the support of both the Business Council, Tech NYC and a number of local chambers of commerce because we've matched these regulations with those that exist in other states so that it doesn't add any new compliance costs to New York

business, but simply provides relief to New York consumers. And for all of those reasons I proudly vote yes.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Bores in the affirmative.

Are there any other votes? The Clerk will announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06765, Rules Report No. 114, Torres. (She doesn't say the title, but I think we should put it in anyway) An act to amend the General Business Law, in relation to requiring disclosure of algorithmically-set prices.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On a motion by Ms. Torres, the amendments are received and adopted.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06867, Rules Report No. 115, Hyndman, Colton, Alvarez, Jacobson. An act to amend the Labor Law, in relation to prevailing wage for covered airport workers.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: This bill is laid aside.

B-Calendar, page 3, Rules Report No. 116, the Clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06767, Rules Report No. 116, Vanel. An act to amend the General Business Law, in relation to artificial intelligence companion models (Part \_).

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last

section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect on the 180th day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Are there any other votes? The Clerk will announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

THE CLERK: Assembly No. A06868, Rules Report No. 117, Hooks, Colton, Alvarez, Zinerman. An act to amend the Labor Law, in relation to the civil penalties for violations of child labor laws.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Read the last section.

THE CLERK: This act shall take effect immediately.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: The Clerk will record the vote.

(The Clerk recorded the vote.)

Mr. Palmesano to explain his vote.

MR. PALMESANO: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm glad to see this legislation supports child labor laws. Now if we could just take it a step further and look out for the children of the Democratic Republic of Congo that are mining --

(Laughter)

-- (inaudible). So once we get there we'll be making some strong progress. I vote aye.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Mr. Palmesano in the affirmative.

(Applause)

Are there any other votes? The Clerk will announce the results.

(The Clerk announced the results.)

The bill is passed.

Congratulations, Ms. Hooks. This is your first bill.

(Applause)

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Madam Speaker, do you have any further housekeeping or resolutions?

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: We have a number of resolutions before the House. Without objection, these resolutions will be taken up together.

On the resolutions, all those in favor signify by saying aye; opposed, no. The resolutions are adopted.

(Whereupon, Assembly Resolution Nos. 256-259 were unanimously adopted.)

Mrs. Peoples-Stokes.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would first like to acknowledge that there will be a

Speaker's -- in the Speaker's Conference Room a -- actually, no, it's Hearing Room C and we're going to go there immediately to hear from the Speaker. But a Majority Conference only.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: Majority Conference in Hearing Room C after the conclusion of Session.

MRS. PEOPLES-STOKES: Just to be clear, Madam Speaker. And I now move that the Assembly stand adjourned and that we reconvene at 12:00 noon, Wednesday, March the 26th, tomorrow being a Session day.

ACTING SPEAKER HUNTER: On Mrs. Peoples-Stokes' motion, the House stands adjourned.

(Whereupon, at 4:58 p.m., the House stood adjourned until Wednesday, March 26th at 12:00 noon, that being a Session day.)