

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021



CARL E. HEASTIE, SPEAKER  
LINDA B. ROSENTHAL, CHAIR

**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY**  
**COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES**



LINDA B. ROSENTHAL  
Assembly Member 67th District

THE ASSEMBLY  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY

CHAIR  
Committee on Social Services

COMMITTEES  
Agriculture  
Codes  
Health  
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MEMBER  
Taskforce on Women's Issues  
Legislative Women's Caucus

December 15, 2021

Honorable Carl E. Heastie  
Speaker of the Assembly  
Legislative Office Building, Room 932  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Speaker Heastie:

On behalf of the Assembly Standing Committee on Social Services, I respectfully submit the Committee's 2021 Annual Report. This year, the Committee was successful in securing passage of various measures that will assist low-income individuals and families in achieving greater economic stability. The Committee also restored critical funding during the 2021 fiscal year for programs that provide innovative and effective opportunities to escape poverty.

During the 2021-22 budget process, the Committee assisted with the design of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) using \$2.3 billion in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) funding from the federal government to ensure individuals and families received financial assistance to cover rental and/or utilities arrears to prevent evictions and utility shut offs during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the 2021-22 legislative session, the Committee reported several pieces of legislation aimed at improving the lives of people affected by domestic violence, children, people with disabilities, the working poor and individuals who receive public assistance (PA) benefits or other forms of government funded assistance. Many of the legislative initiatives advanced by the Committee focused on the need to improve the current public assistance system to provide recipients with the support necessary to achieve self-sufficiency. Some other initiatives include expanding the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to allow recipients to use their SNAP benefits to purchase hot and prepared foods, allowing phone interviews for cash assistance, expanding services and supports to survivors of human trafficking and providing free menstrual products to individuals in homeless shelters statewide.

The Committee was very pleased to be able to secure the passage of A.8009, which makes vouchers available under the Family Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement Program (FHEPS) in social services districts with a population of five million or more. This bill brings the maximum rent for state FHEPS to 100% of the fair market rent, and will move more families into permanent, stable housing.

The Committee continues to be committed to advancing legislation that will improve New York's social safety net to help vulnerable and marginalized New Yorkers transition from public assistance to economic independence. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and leadership throughout the past session. I look forward to working with you and our colleagues in the Assembly in the 2022 legislative session to protect and improve vital services that provide a path to self-sufficiency for some of the most vulnerable populations of our State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Rosenthal". The signature is written in black ink on a white background.

Linda B. Rosenthal  
Chair  
Assembly Committee on Social Services

**2021 ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE  
NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES**

**Linda B. Rosenthal  
Chair**

**Committee Members**

**Majority**

Jeffrion L. Aubry  
Charles Barron  
Maritza Davila  
Simcha Eichenstein  
Nathalia Fernandez  
Phara Souffrant Forrest  
Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas  
Pamela Hunter  
Karines Reyes  
Daniel Rosenthal  
Michaëlle Solages

**Minority**

Matthew Simpson (Ranker)  
Andrew Goodell  
Keith P. Brown  
Robert Smullen  
Mark Walczyk

**Committee Staff**

Nicholas Guile, Committee Clerk

**Program and Counsel Staff**

Jennifer Sacco, Assistant Secretary for Program and Policy  
Jennifer Marrero, Principal Analyst  
Sarah Conklin, Executive Secretary

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The New York State Assembly Social Services Committee has jurisdiction over legislation affecting programs providing financial and support services to low-income households in New York State. The work of the Committee also affects seniors and people with disabilities or visual impairments residing in the community and in residential care facilities. The statutory basis for these programs lies within the State Social Services Law.

The Committee works with the Committees on Health, Children and Families, Aging, Labor and Housing. The Committee has legislative oversight responsibilities for programs administered by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA).

OTDA is responsible for supervising programs that provide assistance and support to eligible families and individuals in the state. Some of OTDA's functions include providing temporary cash assistance, assistance in paying for food and heating assistance; overseeing New York State's child support enforcement program; determining certain aspects of eligibility for Social Security Disability benefits; supervising housing and services programs for people experiencing homelessness; and providing assistance to certain immigrant populations.

The Legislature enacted the Social Services Law to authorize the administration of basic temporary assistance and emergency support programs statewide. The local Departments of Social Services (DSS), or Human Resource Administration (HRA) in New York City, implement the Social Service Law to provide temporary help to individuals and families with their economic and social services needs to assist them in reaching self-sufficiency. These programs include Family Assistance, Safety Net Assistance, Emergency Assistance to Needy Families with Children, Emergency Assistance for Adults, and certain parts of the Supplemental Security Income Program.

- Family Assistance (FA) - FA is a federally funded temporary assistance (TA) program for families. FA can only be provided to a family that includes a minor child living with a parent or caretaker relative, or to a pregnant woman. As a TANF-funded program, FA is subject to the state 60-month lifetime limit on assistance.
- Safety Net Assistance (SNA) - established by the Welfare Reform Act (WRA) of 1997 to provide assistance to individuals and families who are ineligible for Family Assistance (FA) or other federal temporary assistance programs. The SNA program is comprised of cash and non-cash components.
- Emergency Assistance to Needy Families with Children (EAF) - is a federally funded program which provides assistance to deal with crisis situations threatening families with a child under the age of 18, or under 19 and attending full-time secondary school or the equivalent level of vocational or technical training. EAF is designed to meet needs resulting from a sudden occurrence or circumstances that were unforeseen and beyond the applicant's control that demand immediate attention.
- Emergency Assistance for Adults (EAA) - are grants to assist aged, blind or disabled individuals and couples who have been determined eligible for or are receiving federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits or additional state payments and applied for such assistance to meet emergency needs that cannot be met by the regular monthly benefits of SSI and additional state payments.

- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program- established by Congress in 1974 under Title XVI of the Social Security Act. The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers the program, which provides a federal grant to individuals and couples who are aged, blind, or disabled.

### Homeless Services

Local social services districts also have a responsibility to provide services and assistance to individuals to prevent homelessness, to meet the temporary housing and other immediate needs of eligible people experiencing homelessness, and to assist people experiencing homelessness secure permanent housing. Individuals eligible for such assistance are those who are experiencing homelessness and eligible for TA.

### Domestic Violence

The federal Wellstone-Murray Family Violence Option allows states to address the safety needs of domestic violence victims and their children within the state's TANF plan. The Family Violence Option includes procedures for screening for domestic violence, assessment and service referrals.

### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

New York administers the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which issues monthly benefits that can be used to purchase food at authorized retail food stores. Benefits are provided through an electronic benefit card, like a debit or credit card. Eligibility and benefit levels are based on household size, income, expenses and other factors.

Any person has the right to file an application for a type of temporary assistance or care with their local social services district at any time. Each applicant for services is required to meet all eligibility requirements in order to receive benefits. OTDA has created a website, [mybenefits.ny.gov](http://mybenefits.ny.gov), where individuals are able to learn about available benefits and the requirements to receive such benefits.

## II. SIGNIFICANT LEGISLATION – 2021

### A. GENERAL INITIATIVES

#### **Menstrual Products in Shelters**

**A.529A (Rosenthal, L.)/S.6572 (Hinchey)**

This bill would require that menstrual products be provided to people who need them in homeless shelters.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 794.

#### **Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council**

**A.1160C (Bronson)/S.2755C (Ramos)**

This bill creates a Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council to reduce child poverty in the state by 50% in ten years. This bill builds off the work that was done through the Anti-Poverty Initiatives in 2016-17.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 51.

#### **Report on Publicly Funded Homeless Shelters during a State of Emergency**

**A.1258 (Hevesi)/S.873 (Liu)**

This bill requires OTDA, in consultation with the local health departments, commissioners of Department of Health, Department of Homeless Services and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, to collect and publish a report regarding the effects on sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families during a state disaster emergency. The report will be posted on each respective agency website.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 12.

### B. HUMAN TRAFFICKING

#### **Civil Case of Action for Human Trafficking Survivors**

**A.3186 (Hevesi)/S.672 (Sanders)**

This bill would extend the statute of limitations to provide survivors of human trafficking 15 years within which to commence a court action against perpetrators. Currently, a survivor who is a minor or mentally incapacitated has 3 years after they turn 18 years old or are no longer mentally incapacitated to commence an action in civil court.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 311.

**Availability of Social and Legal Services for Human Trafficking Survivors  
A.3331 (Hevesi)/S. 924 (Ramos)**

This bill provides, police officers and district attorneys must provide an individual who appears to be or identified themselves as a human trafficking survivor with information about the available social and legal services, unless that person explicitly rejects the information.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 658.

**Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking  
A.7484 (Gonzalez-Rojas)/S.6696 (Persaud)**

The Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking was originally created in 2007 and charged with the coordination and implementation of the new human trafficking law, as well as studying issues that may need further reform, including ensuring that survivors are properly protected, and assisting in collecting data on the extent of trafficking in the state and recommending best practices for training and community outreach to help law enforcement, social service providers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and the general public to recognize trafficking situations. The Task Force was also charged with measuring and evaluating the state's progress in preventing trafficking and prosecuting persons engaged in such trafficking. This bill extends the duties of the Task Force until September 1, 2023.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 227.

**C. INCOME MAINTENANCE**

**Health Care Practitioners and Disability Determinations  
A.3149 (Hevesi)/S.7109 (Persaud)**

The federal government recognizes the importance of giving sufficient consideration to a physician's medical opinion and follows this practice in Social Security determinations, as detailed in 20 CFR 416.927. Current New York State law gives little to no consideration the opinion of the treating health care practitioner's opinion when an individual applying for PA has work limitations, disabilities or health issues that have been identified by their treating health care practitioner. This bill would require the recipient/applicant's treating health care practitioner's diagnosis to be controlling, assuming certain factors are met.

This bill was vetoed, Memo 52.

**Conciliation Process  
A.3227 (Hunter)/S.668 (May)**

In an effort to assist public assistance recipients stay focused on their work activities, A.3227 would streamline conciliation processes by focusing on re-engaging the client. Under the current process, even if the recipient misses just one appointment, the local social services district is required to expend time and resources focused on sanctioning the client rather than re-engaging the client in work activities as soon as possible. Not only would this bill enable

the local social services districts to focus time and resources on the key goal of engagement, but it would also help the recipients by removing durational sanctions in the rest of the state, as is the current practice in New York City, to allow them to re-engage with their work activity as soon as possible so they can receive the full benefit.

This bill was vetoed, Memo 59.

**Notice of Possible Liability to Reimburse County for Public Assistance  
A.3766 (Dickens)/S.6269 (Parker)**

This bill would require the local districts to fully inform public assistance applicants orally and in writing via separate acknowledgment form that they may be liable to reimburse the state for benefits received.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 448.

**Phone Interviews for Public Assistance  
A.5414 (Rosenthal, L.)/S.3223A (Persaud)**

This bill would allow phone interviews for cash assistance applications at the districts' option. This bill also allows domestic violence and substance use screenings to take place over the phone for the purpose of establishing a person's ability to participate in their work activity.

This bill makes permanent the Executive Order which allowed phone interviews to take place during the pandemic.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 133.

**Extends Public Assistance Income and Resources Exemptions  
A.7656 (Rosenthal, L.)/ S.7017 (Persaud)**

This legislation ensures that families can retain essential assets while remaining eligible for PA by expending the current law regarding exemptions for two years, which are used when determining a family's financial eligibility for PA. If the existing provision were not extended, the type and amount being exempted would be left to regulatory action by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, subject to the approval of the Division of the Budget, potentially disrupting the stability of the current list of exemptions.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 165.

**Suspension of Driving Privileges  
A.7657 (Bichotte Hermelyn)/S.7016 (Persaud)**

Local social services districts, in conjunction with the Department of Motor Vehicles, are authorized to suspend the driver's license of an individual who is delinquent in child support payments. This legislation extends this provision until August 31, 2023.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 183.

### **Camp Fees**

#### **A.7714 (Hunter)/S.7133 (Persaud)**

This bill would authorize camp fee payments for children in households that receive Safety Net Assistance. Currently, camp fee payments are covered only for children in households receiving TANF assistance. This corrects an unintended consequence of the Welfare Reform Legislation in 1997.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 126.

## **D. SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)**

### **Online SNAP Program**

#### **A.1262 (Hevesi)/S.878 (Kaminsky)**

The 2014 Federal Farm Bill mandated that a pilot program be conducted to test the possibility of allowing retail food stores to accept SNAP benefits through online transactions. Under the pilot, SNAP recipients are permitted to use their benefits to purchase eligible food items at specific online retailers. New York was chosen as a pilot state and started the pilot in April 2019 in a limited number of designated zip codes.

This bill requires OTDA to seek any necessary approvals from the federal government to make the SNAP online pilot program statewide and permanent.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 15.

### **Statewide SNAP Restaurant Meal Program**

#### **A.1524(Reyes)/ S.64 (Persaud)**

This bill would require OTDA to create a statewide restaurant meal program as a part of SNAP. This program would allow households with a senior, individual with a disability and their spouse, and people experiencing homelessness to use their SNAP benefits to access food through the restaurant program.

This bill was signed into law; Chapter 430.

## **III. SFY 2021-22 STATE BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS**

### **A. Overview of the TANF Block Grant**

The nation's welfare system was dramatically changed with the enactment of the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA). The federal law adopted a "work first" approach, eliminated the entitlement to cash assistance, and imposed time limits, work requirements and sanctions on recipients. The cornerstone of the law was the creation of the TANF block grant, which provides states funding for their cash assistance and welfare-to-work programs.

New York received \$2.442 billion for the Family Assistance program through the federal TANF block grant. The 2021-22 state budget included approximately \$1.5 billion to support benefit payments to low-income New Yorkers.

## **B. TANF Programs and Allocations**

New York's TANF program has developed into the state's most critical system of support and assistance for children and families who struggle to make ends meet. In New York, programs including wage supplements, tax credits, job training and skill development, case management and counseling, childcare and transportation were developed to assist families in need during the transition from poverty to self-sufficiency through work. For several years, New York has been authorized to utilize TANF funds for families eligible for federal assistance through the FA program and families whose income does not exceed 200% of the federal poverty level.

The 2020-21 budget included a Flexible Fund for Family Services (FFFS) to provide local districts with a block grant. For a program to receive funding out of the TANF surplus, it must meet one of the four TANF purposes:

1. Provide assistance to needy families;
2. End the dependence of needy parents by promoting job preparation, work and marriage;
3. Prevent and reduce out-of-wedlock pregnancies; and
4. Encourage the formation and maintenance of two-parent families.

Below is a breakdown of state spending of the TANF dollars for the SFY 2021-22:

### **CHILD CARE INVESTMENTS**

The childcare subsidy program provided by local social services districts enables an income-eligible parent or caretaker to work or engage in other approved activities by helping parent(s)/caretaker(s) to pay some or all the cost of childcare services. A \$310 million block grant was included in the budget to provide subsidies to parents.

### **EMPLOYMENT AND TRANSITIONAL INITIATIVES**

*Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority (RGRTA):* This program provides a monthly bus pass to allow eligible individuals from seven member counties to travel to and from work, or to participate in work-related activities. In Wayne County, funds are used to support the transportation costs of individuals who use the WATS Demand Response Bus Services or TANF work participation activities. Funds are also used to extend the WATS service hours to accommodate employees at Kraft. RGRTA was awarded \$82,000 in the budget.

*Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP):* The purpose of the TANF SYEP is to provide eligible youth with a quality employment and educational experience during the summer months. For many youths, the SYEP provides their first introduction to the world of work. Valuable lessons which center on employment, including work ethic, appropriate workplace behavior, interaction with co-workers and supervisors, receiving a paycheck and money management are learned. \$45 million was allocated to fund the employment program.

*Domestic Violence Screening:* Domestic Violence Screening involves identifying people who are currently victims of domestic violence and offering temporary waivers from the public assistance

(PA) program requirements where compliance with such requirements would place the victim and/or victim's children at greater risk of harm or make it more difficult for them to escape from abuse. \$750,000 was budgeted to provide these services.

*Wage Subsidy Program:* Employers are reimbursed for wages and related benefits that the employer paid to the participant during the subsidy period. Using wage subsidies as a hiring incentive, nonprofit agencies work with employers to develop positions for individuals who have been unable to find employment through conventional means. This program was allocated \$475,000 to provide subsidies.

## **LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES**

*ACCESS – Welfare to Careers:* Metropolitan College's Welfare-to-Careers Consortium Program is collaboration among three major higher educational institutions in New York City (Metropolitan College, Medgar Evers College and Pace University). The Consortium affords participants the opportunity to earn their two-year degree or a baccalaureate degree, thereby greatly increasing their chances of gaining permanent, full-time employment at a sustainable salary level. \$800,000 was allocated for the ACCESS program.

*Disability Advocacy Program:* This program provides for the legal representation of individuals whose federal disability benefits have been denied or may be discontinued and received \$3.63 million in this year's budget.

## **FLEXIBLE FUND FOR FAMILY SERVICES (FFFS)**

The FFFS encompasses a number of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs administered by local departments of social services that are funded with the Federal TANF Services Block Grant. The SFY 2021-22 allocation for FFFS is \$964 million.

## **VI. PANDEMIC EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE**

In response to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, New York State received \$128 million federal Pandemic Emergency Assistance: half of the funds were used for the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program, the remaining funds were divided between the three uses outlined below, with a third going to cover the cost of diapers, food programs for the elderly and domestic violence relocation costs.

- \$69.9 million for the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program - Federal funds to help low-income people pay drinking and wastewater arrears and other related expenses. The program has launched and provides eligible households with payments up to \$2,500 per drinking water or wastewater provider, or \$5,000 if services are combined.
- Diapers - \$140 per family receiving TA or SNAP with a child under the age of three years of age.
- Emergency Food Assistance Programs for the Elderly - \$730 for each senior person who is part of a household receiving TANF benefits or SNAP.

- Domestic Violence Relocation costs including but not limited to deposits, utility deposits, moving services, first and last months' rent.

### **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)**

New York received \$2.3 billion in federal funding to assist households unable to pay residential rent and/or utilities due to financial problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

APPENDIX A

# 2021 SUMMARY SHEET

SUMMARY OF ACTION ON ALL BILLS  
REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE ON

Social Services

**TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD**     6

	<u>ASSEMBLY BILLS</u>	<u>SENATE BILLS</u>	<u>TOTAL BILLS</u>
<b>BILLS REPORTED FAVORABLE TO:</b>			
FLOOR	4	0	4
WAYS AND MEANS	13	0	13
CODES	4	0	4
RULES	5	0	5
JUDICIARY	0	0	0
TOTAL	26	0	26
<b>COMMITTEE ACTION</b>			
HELD FOR CONSIDERATION	2	0	2
ENACTING CLAUSES STRICKEN	3	0	0
DEFEATED	0	0	0
<b>REMAINING BILLS IN COMMITTEE</b>	76	4	80
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD</b>	6		

APPENDIX B

**FINAL ACTION ON BILLS REPORTED BY THE  
SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

<b>ASSEMBLY BILL # SPONSOR</b>	<b>SENATE BILL # SPONSOR</b>	<b>FINAL ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
A.529A Rosenthal, L.	S.6572 Hinchey	Approval Memo 146	Provides feminine hygiene products to all individuals that need them in homeless shelters, excluding shelters in NYC.
A.7672 Rosenthal, L.	S.5574 Persaud	Referred to Ways and Means	Would expand the current income and resources exemptions that are allowable when applying for public assistance.
A.638 Rosenthal, L.		Referred to Codes	Would require any provider of temporary housing assistance to have a trained employee on duty at all times to administer an opioid antagonist. Twice a year all providers of temporary housing assistance would be required to offer training to all individuals residing in shelter on how to administer opioid antagonists. This training would be provided by a registered opioid overdose prevention program.
A.1160C Bronson	S.2755C Ramos	Approval Memo 51	Creates a Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council to reduce child poverty in the state by 50% in ten years.
A.1302 Rosenthal, L.	S.6419 Brisport	Referred to Ways and Means	Would provide an increase to the monthly state assistance for food and vet expenses for guide dogs, hearing dogs and service dogs of individuals qualifying for social service benefits.
A.1524 Reyes	S.64 Persaud	Chapter 430	Requires OTDA to create a statewide restaurant meals program as part of SNAP. The program would allow SNAP households with an elderly or disabled individual and their spouse, and homeless individual the option to access food through the restaurant meals program.
A.2529A Barron	S.787A Krueger	Referred to Ways and Means	Would eliminate the requirement to have a lien placed on a home as condition of eligibility for public assistance.
A.3149 Hevesi	S.7109 Persaud	Veto Memo 52	Would require that in instances where a certified DSS practitioner is evaluating an applicant, the opinion of the applicant's treating physician be considered controlling in the determination, and that any denial must include a written explanation that presents evidence to support the certified practitioner's differing opinion.

<b>ASSEMBLY BILL # SPONSOR</b>	<b>SENATE BILL # SPONSOR</b>	<b>FINAL ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
A.2583 Hevesi	S.803 Biaggi	Referred to Ways and Means	Would provide mental health services, Child Health Plus (CHP), and legal representation in immigration court to unaccompanied minors in New York. When a child leaves a foster care agency to live with a sponsor in New York State, the foster care agencies will be required to provide the child or the sponsor with information detailing supports and services that the child will be eligible to receive in New York. This bill also establishes immigration services liaisons within the Office for New Americans (ONA).
A.3227 Hunter	S. 668 May	Veto Memo 59	Would require local social services districts outside of New York City, prior to imposing a sanction on a PA recipient for failure to comply with work rules, to confirm that the recipient is not exempt from the work requirement, and that the recipient had appropriate childcare, transportation, and disability accommodations. Additionally, the bill would require sanctions to be removed once the issue has been remedied.
A.3186 Hevesi	S.672 Sanders	Chapter 311	Allows a survivor of human trafficking 15 years to commence a court action against the perpetrator. Currently if a survivor was a minor or mentally incapacitated, they would have 3 years from the time they became 18 years old or no longer mentally incapacitated to start a court action.
A.1258 Hevesi	S.873 Liu	Chapter 12	Require OTDA, in consultation with the local health departments, commissioners of Department of Health, Department of Homeless Services and NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, to collect and publish information regarding the effects on sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families during a state disaster emergency.
A.1262 Hevesi	S.878 Kaminsky	Chapter 15	Requires OTDA to seek waivers from the USDA to make the SNAP Online Pilot Programs statewide and permanent.
A.3331 Hevesi	S.924 Ramos	Chapter 658	Helps to ensure that human trafficking survivors receive prompt access to social and legal services.
A.3766 Dickens	S.6269 Parker	Chapter 448	Requires applicants for public assistance to be fully informed that they may be liable to reimburse the state for benefits received.
A.5414 Rosenthal, L.	S.3223A Persaud	Chapter 133	Allows phone interviews for cash assistance applications at the districts option. This bill would also allow the domestic violence screening and substance uses screening to take place over the phone for the purposes of establishing a person's ability to participate in their work activity.

<b>ASSEMBLY BILL # SPONSOR</b>	<b>SENATE BILL # SPONSOR</b>	<b>FINAL ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
A.5613A Gottfried	S.4540A Rivera	Referred to Ways and Means	Would prohibit lawsuits to recover over payments from recipients under the age of 21 and in circumstances in which an over payment did not result due to any fault of the recipient. Protects Medicaid recipients in which an over payment resulted due to a change in the Medicaid eligibility group and recipients whose eligibility was granted or extend due to the COVID health emergency. It creates a waiver for recipients when repaying the over payment would create an economic or other hardship. Recipients who currently have over payment agreements, this bill would create a debt forgiveness and relief because of the COVID health emergency. Prohibits the use of confessions of judgement in the recovery of over payments for PA and Medicaid. Reduces the statute of limitations for starting an over payment action from 6 years to 2 years. This bill also requires due process for recipients during the investigation process, including notice that informs the recipient of the over payment claim, this basis and proof of that claim and the recipients rights in the process.
A.6709B Rosenthal, L.	S.5759B Brisport	Third Reading Calendar	Would exempt cash transfer funds received by individuals selected to participate in a pilot program aimed at determining the success of providing at risk youth with a month cash transfer for a limited amount of time. This bill would exempt cash transfer funds for 2 years, the duration of the pilot program.
A.7048A Rosenthal, L.	S.6845 Kavanagh	Referred to Ways and Means	Would remove the requirement for an individual to repay rent arrears assistance, starting on March 13, 2020.
A.7219A Rosenthal, L.	S.6844 Kavanagh	Referred to Ways and Means	Would remove the requirement that an individual must have a court proceeding initiated against them in order to qualify for rent arrears assistance.
A.7484 Gonzalez- Rojás	S.6696 Persaud	Chapter 227	Extends for 2 years the interagency task force on human trafficking and the duties and meeting requirements of the task force.
A.7528 Rosenthal, L.	S.7035 May	Referred to Ways and Means	Would provide a definition for "closed period of eligibility" for the purposes of eligibility of certain SSI payments.
A.7656 Rosenthal, L.	S.7017 Persaud	Chapter165	Provides an extension of current exemptions of income and resources to qualify for public assistance programs.
A.7657 Bichotte Hermelyn	S.7016 Persaud	Chapter 183	Provides an extension authorizing local social services districts, in conjunction with the Department of Motor Vehicles, to suspend the driver's license of an individual that is delinquent in child support payments.

<b>ASSEMBLY BILL # SPONSOR</b>	<b>SENATE BILL # SPONSOR</b>	<b>FINAL ACTION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
A.7714 Hunter	S.7133 Persaud	Chapter 126	Authorizes camp payments for children in households that receive Safety Net Assistance. Previous law only allowed a camp fee payment for children in households receiving TANF assistance. This was an unintended consequence of welfare reform legislation in 1997.
A.7726 Rosenthal, L.	S.7007 Persaud	Chapter144	Allows for interviews by phone or other digital means for cash assistance applications at the request of the individual. This bill also allowed the domestic violence screening and substance uses screening to take place over the phone or other digital means for the purposes of establishing a person's ability to participate in their work activity, at the request of the individual.

## APPENDIX C

### LEGISLATIVE HEARINGS/ROUNDTABLES

#### **Community Services Block Grant Hearing**

June 16, 2021

Via ZOOM

The Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) is a federally funded program administered by the Division of Community Services within the Department of State (DOS). There are 52 CSBG grantees in the New York State network which serve all 62 counties with services catered to the needs of each community. The CSBG awards Community Action Agencies (CAA), Community Action Programs, migrant, and seasonal farm worker organizations, as well as Native tribes or Tribal organizations the necessary funds to provide advocacy, outreach, programs, and services to the indigent populations living in communities throughout New York State. These funds in turn are used to combat poverty and revitalize low-income neighborhoods, while encouraging families as well as individuals in rural and urban areas to become self-sufficient and financially stable.

This year the Assembly Standing Committee on Social Services hosted the biennial community Service Block Grant hearing where witnesses provided testimonies on the access to CSBG funds as well as how they were utilized by community action agencies. Witnesses who participated at the hearing included the Chief Executive Officer of the New York State Community Action Association, Assistant Commissioner of the New York City Department of Youth & Community Development, the Resource Specialist representing the Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency Inc., and the President of the Commission on Economic Opportunity.

Witnesses provided testimony that the CSBG was a vital source of funding for special programs geared toward aiding individuals and families in need. The CSBG funds allowed for the continuance of special programs ranging from financial literacy initiatives, immigrant services, fatherhood initiatives, trade certifications, community development initiatives as well as summer youth employment. The primary concerns of community action agencies in relation to the CSBG funds were agencies needing sufficient notice and time to prepare and submit information, reports, contracts, and things such as comments on the CSBG management plan, in order to produce high quality work in a comprehensive manner. Funding for CAA services is limited and has become increasingly difficult to access for social services and community-based programs. CAAs request that DOS keep discretionary funds within the Community Action Network to respond to the limited source of funds. CAAs' have advocated for the creation of a Commission on Poverty and Economic Security, having such a commission would enhance the focus on the efforts to address poverty, employment support and public benefits.

## **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)**

August 10, 2021

New York City

The Assembly Committees on Housing, Social Services, and Ways and Means hosted a joint hearing to examine the application process and the implementation of the ERAP program. The federal government passed the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions Act (HEROES Act), providing states with billions of dollars to enact rental assistance programs to assist households that have been unable to pay residential rent and/or utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. New York received approximately \$2.6 billion in federal funding to enact the ERAP. On June 1, 2021, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), via its vendor, Guidehouse, began accepting applications through an online applications portal.

Many people who testified at the hearing expressed a great level of frustration with the ERAP portal and application process. Individuals expressed frustration with the portal, which was riddled with bugs and glitches and complicated the application submission process. Individuals also complained about how burdensome the application process is for many people, the inability to check on or confirm the status of one's application, the fact that applicants could not talk to a "live" person when problems arose during submitting the application. People also raised concerns about language inaccessibility, and the onerous and unnecessary document and identification requirements, which were particularly burdensome for low-income New Yorkers, immigrants, survivors of domestic violence and other vulnerable New Yorkers.

OTDA acknowledged that the portal experienced several glitches, and that problems were slow to be fixed, but assured Members that the issues were being addressed. To address the long processing time for approvals of applications, OTDA claimed it moved staff to make an additional 350 staff available to work on ERAP applications. This staff increase was predicted to cut the wait time for application approvals in half.

## **Homelessness in New York State**

December 14, 2021

New York City

Homelessness continues to be one of the most significant issues facing New York State. According to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, as many as 91,271 individuals in New York State were experiencing homelessness as of January 2020. The homelessness problem is especially pervasive in New York City, where the Coalition for the Homeless reported in August 2021 that nearly 48,000 individuals spend each night in the city shelter system.

Over the years, the State has taken steps to help prevent vulnerable individuals from becoming homeless. The 2021-22 New York State enacted budget included \$100 million in funding to provide rental supplements to individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. However, the number of people experiencing homelessness continues to multiply.

Much of the testimony provided expressed the need for more affordable and supportive housing and greatly needed Housing Access vouchers. Individuals also testified regarding the need for more housing for runaway and homeless youth, and about the A number for current/formally homeless individuals provided testimony regarding the need to increase the public assistance rental voucher amount, since it is incredibly low and has not been increased in decades.