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Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY)

BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE AGENDA 2026

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BUDGET ASKS

Increased funding to \$147.15M to support updated Ballot Marking Devices statewide, with priority to high-need counties

New York State must ensure that every voter can cast a private, independent ballot, including voters with disabilities who rely on Ballot Marking Devices (BMDs). While the State Board of Elections certifies equipment, many counties—including the five boroughs of New York City—still rely on outdated and separate Ballot Marking Devices that are prone to malfunction and are most often used by the disabled population. Modern dual-function systems, such as the integrated devices currently in use in Dutchess, Orange, and Monroe Counties, serve as both accessible Ballot Marking Devices and ballot tabulators, thus ensuring universal usability and also requiring county boards of elections to maintain them throughout Election Day because all voters rely on the same equipment. To reduce equipment failures, improve accessibility, and ensure consistency in voting technology statewide, the Legislature should appropriate \$147.15 million to support counties in purchasing, training staff on, and maintaining three updated, certified, dual-function devices per polling site (estimated at approximately \$10,900 per machine), prioritizing counties with outdated systems or significant accessibility gaps.

Increased State share of funding for the Long-term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) to \$15 million

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP) serves as an advocate and resource for people living in nursing facilities and other institutions. It works to promote and protect patients' rights as well as their health and safety, by receiving, investigating, and resolving complaints made by or on behalf of residents. LTCOP receives federal funding, but it is insufficient to provide adequate services in New York State, where the match is one of the lowest in the nation. The Legislature should increase the State share of funding of LTCOP to \$15 million to help address the many serious inadequacies in nursing home and other residential care in the State.

Increased funding for Community Health Advocates (CHA), the State's health care consumer assistance program, to \$7 million

Community Health Advocates (CHA) helps New Yorkers understand and use their insurance. CHA's free services are available statewide through a network of community-based organizations and a toll-free helpline. Since 2010, CHA has saved consumers over \$180 million and worked on more than 498,000 cases for people needing help getting

the care they need or resolving billing disputes. CHA should be fully funded at \$7 million so that New Yorkers can continue to receive this help.

Enrollment Assistance Funding for Public Health Insurance

Too many New Yorkers are uninsured because they are unaware that they qualify for assistance or public programs or do not know how to enroll. Under HR 1, 1.7 million New Yorkers may lose their existing coverage, and many more will see their premiums increase sharply when the enhanced premium tax credits expire. Navigators are local in-person assistors who help consumers and small businesses shop for and enroll in health insurance plans. The Navigator program should be funded at \$38 million to guarantee continued high-quality enrollment services. New York should also allocate \$5 million in grants to community-based organizations to conduct outreach and education about changes in eligibility and costs under HR 1 and the availability of free enrollment assistance.

Fully fund the Foundation Aid formula, and make critical updates to the formula itself, including updating the Regional Cost Index (RCI) and adding a per-pupil weight for students who are homeless or in foster care

While fully funded for the first time in 2023, the Foundation Aid Formula has remained largely unchanged since it was first adopted in 2007. Since the formula was first created, the educational landscape has changed significantly in NYS, and many aspects of the formula are outdated to the point of potentially causing harm, especially to students with the greatest needs, i.e., those living below the poverty line, English Language Learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities.

Last year, the State had indicated that it would reexamine the Foundation Aid education funding formula—providing an opening to make necessary updates to the formula. However, the limited changes to the formula included in the final NYS Fiscal Year 2026 budget resulted in New York City schools receiving \$314 million less than they would have received had the State made no changes to the formula at all. This shortfall is due to an update to the poverty weight, which measures poverty the same way in every school district across New York, even though the cost of living varies greatly in different parts of the State.

Two updates to the formula could help offset this change:

- Update the RCI (proposed in S.8125/A.9049), which is supposed to account for varying costs throughout the State, but has not been updated since 2006

- Add a per-pupil weight for students who are homeless (over 154,000 in NYC) or in foster care (proposed in S.8139/A.9048)

Adopting these changes will help ensure that education will be funded more equitably across NYS.

Increased State funding for nonprofit human services workers

Human services nonprofits are primarily funded through government contracts, and though program costs have risen with inflation, the amount of funding in State contracts has not. Core human services workers (those working in individual and family services) earned, on average, an annual salary of \$36,688 in 2023, making this sector one of the lowest paid industries in New York (in New York City it is the third lowest-paying industry in the city). This is despite the workforce being comprised of predominantly of highly skilled and educated workers (61% hold a bachelor's degree or higher), and that the workforce provides crucial supports and services to vulnerable New Yorkers.

To ensure that human services nonprofits are adequately funded, and their workers paid fairly, the State should:

- Fund a 2.7% Targeted Inflationary Increase (TII) on all State human services contracts. This investment will help nonprofits cover inflation-related increases in wages and program operations, in line with the current 2.7% Consumer Price Index (CPI).
- Pass S1580/A2590 or S3669 sponsored by Senator Persaud and Assemblymember Hevesi, which would add certain State human services to the designated human services programs eligible for a cost-of-living adjustment.
- Create a Blue-Ribbon Commission on the human services workforce to go beyond the TII and identify ways to increase human services wages for long-term reform.

LEGISLATIVE ASKS

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

CIDNY Supports the Fair Pay for Home Care Act (S8955, Cleare/A1991, Paulin)

An ongoing home care worker shortage has made it difficult for people to obtain home care, and has worsened to the point of crisis throughout the State. The home care crisis has surpassed the lack of accessible and affordable housing as the primary barrier to transitioning people out of nursing facilities back into the community (which is the work of CIDNY's Open Doors program). The State has an obligation under the Supreme Court decision, *Olmstead v. L.C.*, to provide people with support and services in the community, yet the lack of available home care is forcing people who want to leave, to remain in institutions. We acknowledge and appreciate the three-dollar per hour wage increase included in the previous State budget, but know that it will not adequately address the ongoing home care crisis. Full Fair Pay for Home Care would raise wages for home care workers and consumer-directed personal assistants to \$22.50/hr., or 150% of the highest minimum wage.

CIDNY supports the Home Care Restoration Act (S2332, Rivera/A2018, Paulin)

This bill repeals managed long-term care provisions for Medicaid recipients, and establishes provisions for fully integrated plans for long-term care, including PACE and MAP plans. This bill aims to eliminate the current partially capitated Medicaid Long Term Care program, and replace it with long-term care services delivered through a fee-for-service model, while preserving fully capitated models.

The Primary Care Investment Act (S1634, Rivera/A1915A, Paulin)

This bill would create a primary care spending benchmark to measure and report the percentage of insurance carriers' overall healthcare spending that goes towards primary care. The bill would require those who spend less than 12.5% on primary care to increase their primary care spending by 1% each year, until they reach 12.5%. Last year's analysis by the New York Department of Health found seven of ten ER patients have non-emergency medical issues or could be treated by a primary care provider. Oregon, Colorado, Rhode Island, and Delaware have passed laws to increase primary care investment. New York should consider a similar law.

The Fair Pricing Act (S705, Krueger/A2140, Jackson)

This bill relates to fair pricing for low-complexity, routine medical care to more closely align payment rates across ambulatory settings for selected services that are safe and appropriate to provide in all settings. It ensures that routine outpatient services do not cost New Yorkers arbitrarily high prices as a result of hospital market power or consolidation in healthcare.

No Blank Checks (S6375B, Rivera)

Patients are bombarded by signature pads and tablets that require them to guarantee payment without any idea what service they will be receiving, how much their insurance will cover, and if the provider will be billing them correctly. This is essentially a blank check. No other sector tolerates such unlimited financial liability forms. Health Care for All New York (HCFANY) urges the Legislature to introduce a bill to create a uniform patient financial liability form that includes a good faith estimate of a patient's financial obligation for their care.

Consumer Debt Uniformity Act (S5546, Hoylman-Sigal/A57A, Epstein)

This bill would create a consistent definition of consumer debt to ensure the proper application of existing laws. It would ensure existing consumer protections apply to all consumer debts, including medical debt.

CIDNY supports creating a New York Funded Statewide Deafblind Co-Navigator Program (S3743 Cleare/A5020 Zinerman)

This bill would establish a co-navigation services program for persons who are deaf-blind, to provide assistive services to physically access the person's environment and to make informed decisions. It includes providing visual and environmental information or sighted guide services and assisting with communication accessibility by using the preferred language and communication mode of the person who is deaf-blind.

CIDNY supports guaranteed equity in the Medicaid program (A1043, Kim/3554, Cleare)

This bill would increase the Aged, Blind Disabled asset test in Medicaid, which would bring greater equity to the Medicaid program for seniors and people with disabilities.

CIDNY supports Andre's Law (S937, Brisport/A9526, Hevesi)

This bill prohibits the use of aversive conditioning on incarcerated individuals, including any procedure which causes obvious signs of physical pain, including, but not limited to hitting, pinching and electric shock; and prohibits the use of any procedure or punishment which denies a vulnerable person reasonable sleep, shelter, bedding, bathroom facilities and any other aspect expected of a humane existence.

CIDNY supports the Local Input in Community Healthcare (LICH) Act (S1226, Rivera/A6004, Simon)

The Local Input in Community Healthcare Act (LICH) bill mandates public notification, community forums, and revised closure plans that address local needs, ensuring vulnerable populations (disabled, seniors, low-income) aren't left without vital emergency, maternity, or mental health services before hospital closures. This bill was vetoed last year. Recent New York legislation (LICH Act) aims to formalize this by requiring impact assessments, broader stakeholder engagement (residents, providers, unions), and state reporting to prevent devastating impacts from closures, giving communities a legally recognized voice in healthcare decisions.

CIDNY supports NYS Health Act (S3425 Rivera/A1466 Paulin)

This bill establishes the New York Health program, a comprehensive system of access to health insurance for all New York State residents. This may include primary; preventive and specialty care; hospitalization; mental health care; substance use treatment; reproductive health care; dental care; vision care; hearing care; and long-term care.

CIDNY opposes single "Fiscal Intermediary" in the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP)

CIDNY strongly opposes the Single Fiscal Intermediary (FI) Public Partnership LLC (PPL) that Governor Hochul selected and implemented for the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP). Our opposition is based on:

- **Limited Consumer Choice:** Limiting CDPAP to a single FI removes consumers' freedom to choose providers that best meet their needs. Different FIs offer varying levels of service, flexibility, and customer support, which are crucial for consumers who manage their own care.
- **Monopolizing CDPAP:** PPL creates a monopoly, reducing competition and potentially leading to decreased quality of service over time.
- **Eliminating Local Businesses:** Many FIs are local organizations that provide jobs and services within communities. Eliminating competition could harm local economies and reduce employment opportunities.

CIDNY supports the repeal of single Fiscal Intermediary (S1189, Rivera/A2735, Stirpe)

This bill would establish a licensure process and requirements for fiscal intermediaries to continue to operate in the Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP) under Medicaid, and would repeal the transition to a single fiscal intermediary for the state. This legislation is intended to address ongoing concerns that have been raised with the operation of CDPAP while minimizing potential disruption to Medicaid enrollees receiving services and to workers providing services under the program.

CIDNY supports the licensure of Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) in New York State

The Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York (CIDNY) and the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) support the establishment of a bill to ensure that Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRC) become fully licensed in the State of New York. These clinicians have the graduate-level practice and scope of work to work with people with disabilities. In New York State, there are over four million people with documented disabilities. These disabilities include physical, sensory, mental, emotional, cognitive, learning, behavioral, and medical disabilities.

CRCs are uniquely qualified to provide disability-specific vocational, educational, psychological support to adjusting to a disability that enabled our fellow New Yorkers with disabilities to live independently and obtain and maintain employment to engage in their community. By recognizing that other states provide licensure to CRCs, New York will be able to recognize the specific need for this population. The comprehensive and wholistic approach of CRCs and the ability to empower individuals with disabilities to articulate their needs to achieve their personal, social, psychological, vocational, and independent living goals. No other counseling professional is strategically positioned and primarily dedicated to working with individuals with all types of disabilities.

EDUCATION

CIDNY supports the Healthy and Safe Students Act (A7496, Gonzalez-Rojas/S6901A, Salazar)

In 2021, the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics reported that a person with a disability is approximately four times likelier than a person without a disability to be sexually assaulted during their lifetime. In 2015, a study by Wilczynski et al. found that anywhere between 40% and 70% of girls with disabilities will experience sexual abuse before they turn 18, as will 30% of boys with disabilities. Those numbers are consistent across multiple other studies, and are most likely undercounts, because people with disabilities are twice as likely as people without disabilities to not report assaults.

It is often assumed that these higher numbers among people with disabilities relates to physical vulnerabilities that make violence more difficult to resist or report. But most times, the higher numbers are the product of education: People with disabilities are informally and systemically taught to accept their own discomfort, even by those who mean well.

Comprehensive sexuality education is built on an evidence-based, medically accurate, age-appropriate curriculum that refutes the narrative that one's discomfort must be endured. Comprehensive sexuality education students teaches disease prevention, contraception, consent, communication, human development, healthy relationships, and personal boundaries. From kindergarten through 12th grade, students are taught about bodily autonomy: how to recognize it, how to voice it, and how to value it.

CIDNY supports providing New York's students with the protective knowledge and skillset that comprehensive sexuality education provides.

CIDNY supports necessary changes to the Foundation Aid Formula (S8125, Liu/A9049, Simon and S8139, Liu/A9048, Simon)

While fully funded for the first time in 2023, the Foundation Aid Formula has remained largely unchanged since it was first adopted in 2007. Since the formula was first created, the educational landscape has changed significantly in NYS, and many aspects of the formula are outdated to the point of potentially causing harm, especially to students with the greatest needs, i.e., those living below the poverty line, English Language Learners (ELLs), and students with disabilities.

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budget resulted in New York City schools receiving \$314 million less than they would have received had the State made no changes to the formula at all. This shortfall is due to an update to the poverty weight, which measures poverty the same way in every school district across New York, even though costs look very different in different parts of the State.

Two updates to the formula could help offset this change:

- Update the Regional Cost Index (proposed in S.8125/A.9049), which is supposed to account for varying costs throughout the State, but has not been updated since 2006
- Add a per-pupil weight for students who are homeless (over 154,000 in NYC) or in foster care (proposed in S.8139/A.9048)

Adopting these changes will help ensure that education will be funded more equitably across NYS.

CIDNY supports allowing the inclusion of Employee Protection Provisions (EPPs) in NYC busing contracts (S1018, Jackson/A8440, Tapia)

Approximately 43% of students who take these buses have at least one disability. Unless otherwise noted on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), a student is legally allowed to spend up to 90 minutes on the bus in both directions if traveling within one borough, and up to 115 minutes if traveling between boroughs. However, according to data analyzed by the NYC Council in 2022, these travel times are often exceeded: school buses are delayed an average of 45 minutes for students with disabilities.

Current busing contracts restrict the Department of Education's ability to address the routing issues that lead to these delays. Those same contracts also preclude buses from running past 4pm, which means that students who do not have access to alternative methods of transportation are often unable to participate in school programs or extracurricular activities that exceed that time. This exclusion is a tremendous disservice to students with disabilities, and it can be remedied by negotiating new contracts that address these issues.

The current busing contracts are over 45 years old. The reason they keep getting extended rather than rebid is because new contracts are prohibited from including EPPs, which offer critical protections for bus workers. The current busing contracts will expire by July 2028, meaning that in 2.5 years, the City will be able to rebid the busing

contracts if they are able to include EPPs. Passing the legislation that will allow this is critical to improving the quality of life for students with disabilities.

CIDNY supports ensuring that campuses across the City University of New York (CUNY) system and the State University of New York (SUNY) system are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Under the ADA, students with disabilities are entitled to accessible college campuses. However, many CUNY and SUNY campuses fall short of what the ADA stipulates, i.e., classrooms, libraries, students housing, dining facilities, and offices are not always physically accessible.

Signs, including on bathrooms and classroom numbers are not always available in large print or Braille. There are shortages of assistive technology (e.g., screen readers). Students with learning, mental, or developmental disabilities who are entitled to accommodations within the classroom must often depend on instructors who do not know how to offer aid.

CIDNY supports legislation that would ensure students with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations they are entitled to under the ADA at every stage and in every area of the college process, from application through graduation.

EMPLOYMENT

CIDNY supports “Temperature Extreme Mitigation Program (TEMP) Act” (S3412, Ramos/A3527, Bronson)

As New York State continues to experience “record” weather events (heat, cold, flooding, fires), it becomes more imperative than ever to protect employees from the effects of working in extreme weather conditions. The TEMP Act offers this protection by requiring employers to conduct training sessions, develop plans to address heat stress, allow a period of acclimation for new workers in certain industries, and provide employees with protective gear, shade, breaks, and water.

Extreme weather impacts industries across the board, and according to a national study published in 2023 by Lai et al, heat-related injuries alone account for tens of thousands of workplace injuries every year. The industries disproportionately affected by extreme weather are also some of the industries where people with disabilities are most likely to be employed: 19.1% of workers with a disability work in a service occupation, and

15.3% of workers with a disability work in production, transportation, or material moving. The TEMP Act proposes mandatory protections for the people who work in these industries (among others) and in doing so, proposes mandatory protection for people with disabilities who might not only be more vulnerable to injury, but also might be further discouraged or discounted from seeking employment associated with an increasingly high physical or cognitive risk.

CIDNY supports waiving State's sovereign immunity to liability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (S726, Sanders Jr./A2589, Kelles)

This bill would allow State employees to sue the State of New York in state or federal court for violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As it stands, employees with disabilities face barriers at nearly every point in the employment process. Many of the practices involved in applying, hiring, and training are implicitly discriminatory. Often, once a candidate is employed, legally required accommodations are not fully supplied. Employees in the private sector who face these barriers have access to legal recourse upon encountering them. State employees, as of now, are more limited. This bill would change that.

In addition, this bill would allow people with disabilities, regardless of whether they are State employees, to bring civil action against the State of New York if government services, programs, and activities are not made accessible to the disabled public.

This would further ensure that people with disabilities are able to receive the services they are entitled to, not just under the ADA, but as citizens of New York State.

CIDNY supports establishing a reasonable accommodation reimbursement grant program for eligible employers (S8674, Fahy/A9151, Bronson)

According to a Bureau of Labor Statistics report, in 2024, only 37.4% of disabled people between the ages of 16 and 64 were employed in the United States. The same report revealed that employees with a disability were almost twice as likely to work only part time as people without a disability (31% vs 17%); and less likely to work in traditionally higher paid managerial or professional positions than people without disabilities (37.9% compared to 44.1% respectively).

While the reasons behind these statistics are both numerous and nuanced, a contributing factor is the stigma surrounding asking for accommodations, and the (unfortunately, sometimes justified) belief that employers will deem their accommodation requests too expensive and “unreasonable,” and therefore deny them.

This bill would appropriate \$5,000,000 for a grant program under which eligible employers could request a grant for reimbursement of expenses made for reasonable accommodations for applicants or employees with a disability, and in doing so, would explicitly address one of the biggest implicit barriers people with disabilities typically face when attempting to obtain or maintain employment.

CIDNY supports legislation relating to the minimum wage for employees with disabilities (A1006, Steck/S28, Skoufis)

According to data from the most recent American Community Survey, approximately 30% of people with disabilities live below the poverty line. This is almost twice the rate of people without disabilities who live below the poverty line (17%). Several factors contribute to this discrepancy, including barriers to obtaining employment, benefits that have income and savings caps to qualify, and the continued legality in some places of a paying a subminimum wage to people with disabilities.

This bill advocates for eliminating the subminimum wage for employees when that wage is based on age or disability. CIDNY supports the discontinuation of the subminimum wage as an incentive for employers to hire people with disabilities, but does so with the understanding that other protections for the hiring and retention of disabled employees need to be put in place.

Generally, subminimum wage does not refer to competitive integrated employment, but rather to sheltered workshops, or other job programs designed for people with disabilities who are unable to find work competitively. Though this bill specifies that the elimination of the subminimum wage refers to employees in “comparable positions[s]” to employees without disabilities, it also mentions prohibiting these workshops, which provide a lifeline for many disabled individuals who cannot seek competitive integrated employment.

While CIDNY supports ending the subminimum wage for disabled employees, it also acknowledges that not every disabled employee will be able to obtain a comparable position to a nondisabled employee, even with accommodations. These employees also deserve protection, and those protections must be put in place concurrently with ending subminimum wages. This will further ensure that the rate of employment for people with disabilities will not go down despite wages going up.

Therefore, CIDNY supports ending the subminimum wage and countering the narrative that the only two options for employment for people with disabilities are competitive integrated employment and subminimum wages. CIDNY supports finding an option for alternative for employment at these sheltered workshops that does not come at the expense of the employees.

CIDNY supports a series of amendments to Workers' Compensation Law that will make it easier for people with disabilities to receive benefits for workplace injury and illness, including for mental health related injury and illness (S162, Ramos; A9571, Bronson/S172, Ramos; S8240, Ramos; S4479, Ramos; S5990B, Ramos/A5906B, Bores)

In New York State, workers' compensation provides employees with workplace-related illness or injuries partial wages, medical care related to the injuries or illnesses, access to training and job services, social services, rehabilitation counselors, and social workers. All are intended to help employees return to work, and manage any family or financial problems that may have arisen as a result of the basis of their claims.

While almost all employees in New York State have explicit access to these benefits, far fewer have implicit access. As it stands, only some people can afford to obtain workers' compensation. For many others, the upfront costs of lost shifts, transportation that may never get reimbursed, lost wages they might never see, and medical costs they may actually need to pay back if their claim is denied, results in them choosing the safer financial option and not applying for the benefits. People with disabilities are disproportionately likely to be in this type of financial situation prior to experiencing a workplace illness or injury (in New York State, people with disabilities are more than twice as likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities (33% vs 13%).

Workers' compensation is a lifeline for people who have sustained a workplace injury or illness (physical or mental). These bills expand access to that lifeline.

CIDNY supports creating legislation to address the bias against people with disabilities caused by the use of Artificial Intelligence in employment processes

In 2024, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 37.4% of disabled people between the ages of 16 and 64 were employed in the United States. According to the same report, employees with a disability were almost twice as likely to work only part time as people without a disability (31% vs 17%), and less likely to work in traditionally higher paid managerial or professional positions than people without disabilities (37.9% compared to 44.1% respectively). The American Community Survey reported that even when people with disabilities did work fulltime, their median salary was more than \$9,000 lower than the median salary of people without disabilities (\$48,937 vs \$58,113); and among working-age people between the ages of 16 and 64, poverty was more than twice as prevalent in the disabled community as in the non-

disabled community (24.2% vs 9.9%). People with disabilities seeking gainful employment face gaps in hiring, advancement, and wage parity.

Many systemic barriers have created these gaps, including, but not limited to: implicit and explicit bias, income and asset limits, and lack of workplace accessibility. The use of artificial intelligence has already begun to exacerbate them. The [University of Washington](#), the [United Nations](#), the [National Academy of Social Insurance](#), the [International Labour Organization](#), the [Human Rights Law Review](#), and [several other research groups](#) have all reported that AI usage in employment processes poses a significant threat to the disabled community by inadvertently filtering out job applications that mention disability or anything disability related. In many cases, employers do not know that the software they are using might default to filtering out applicants, and because they are unaware, are denied the opportunity to address it.

AI is inherently designed to uphold certain systemic biases: the technology works by drawing from existing (systemic) information, and the results it produces are thereby confined by limitations (biases) of that information. If steps are not taken to address this issue, the employment gap for people with disabilities will only get wider.

HOUSING

CIDNY supports establishing the minimum regulations for the design and construction of new homes to provide visit-ability to such homes by persons with disabilities. (S656, Krueger)

CIDNY supports the creation of minimum standards for the design and construction of new homes that receive state or federal assistance to make them more accessible.

CIDNY supports Right to Counsel: Access to Legal Services in Eviction Proceeding (S6772, Jackson/A4669, Solages)

CIDNY supports the establishment of the civil right to counsel in eviction proceedings in New York State; the creation of the New York State Office of Civil Representation; and the requirement that covered individuals receive notice of such right to counsel.

CIDNY supports Extreme Weather Tenant Protection Act (A9033, Tapia/S8960, Bailey)

CIDNY supports the prohibition to evict tenants from residential properties during the winter months.

CIDNY supports SCRIE and DRIE Priority Bills:

The Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE) programs help eligible seniors and people with disabilities freeze their rents at affordable levels by covering increases through property tax credits for landlords, preventing displacement from rising housing costs.

- **S1457A / A5344 (Kavanagh / Glick):** Would increase the maximum income threshold for SCRIE, DRIE, SCHE and DHE eligibility to \$67,000 and index it to inflation thereafter
- **S3563 (Cleare):** Permits other qualifying members of a household to qualify the household for DRIE when they are not the head of household.
- **S2451A / A7729 (Kavanagh / Lasher):** Would permit localities to opt to reduce payments toward rent to one-third of renters' household income for SCRIE/DRIE.
- **S4252 (Parker):** Provides for a continuation of senior citizen rent increase exemption benefits after a period of ineligibility due to a head of household's temporary increase in income
- **S2534 / A7851 (Sanders / Rosenthal):** Would set SCRIE/DRIE tenant contribution to rent at the later of the original date of eligibility or two years before application to the program is approved.
- **S561 / A1863 (Krueger / Rosenthal):** Would require notice to be sent to eligible tenants regarding the SCRIE and DRIE programs.
- **S3742A / A1563A (Cleare / Rosenthal):** Information to be provided with all new and renewal leases for certain housing accommodations.
- **S4805 / A4984 (Ryan / Buttenschon):** Requires the state to handle the income verification process for the purposes of the senior citizen tax exemption.

TRANSPORTATION

CIDNY supports requiring accessible buses to be available within a service area measuring three miles from any bus line of the authority or its subsidiaries (A574, Steck/S3144 Cooney)

CIDNY supports requiring counties to expand paratransit beyond the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) minimums. The limited availability of accessible transportation services is a major barrier faced by people with disabilities, often leading to unemployment, inability to access medical care, lack of access to voting sites, and isolation from friends, family, and full community participation. The failure to provide

paratransit service throughout the State is a major contributor to this pervasive problem. The ADA requires that counties provide accessible paratransit service to disabled people who are unable to take the fixed-route bus. At minimum, paratransit service must be provided to disabled people within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the closest bus stop. This was always meant to be the floor, not the ceiling. As fixed-route bus lines are eliminated, people are being cut off from paratransit service. This leaves disabled people stranded, without services, or the ability to work, receive services, and attend houses of worship, or medical appointments. The State could address this by increasing the minimum service provided to people who rely on paratransit.

CIDNY supports requiring the registration of bicycles with electric assist used for commercial purposes; providing liability of employers for certain violations (S226, Hoylman-Sigal)

CIDNY supports this bill, having heard too many times of disabled pedestrians being hurt or seriously injured by bicycles and/or e-bikes in New York City, and having no way to file complaints or press charges. This legislation would require the registration and licensure of bicycles with electric assist that are used for commercial purposes and directs the costs of violations relating to riding such bicycles on sidewalks to the employer of commercial riders.

CIDNY supports extending and expanding the scope of the on-demand E-hail paratransit pilot (A1409, Dinowitz/S8333, Comrie)

CIDNY supports this bill that would build upon the successful On-Demand E-Hail Paratransit Pilot Program initiated by the Metropolitan Transit Authority in recent years. This would require fares for such services to be equal to the MTA base fare for subways and buses, the operating hours to be the same as other bus and subway services, and the length and frequency of trips to be unrestricted. CIDNY supports the expansion of this program, as it has been life-changing for New Yorkers with disabilities, offering them flexibility and reliability compared to the outdated Access-A-Ride system. Despite the success of the on-demand program, the MTA imposed ride cost caps in 2019, which has limited the potential of the program. Expanding the program would ensure that New Yorkers with disabilities have timely and reliable access to public transportation.

CIDNY supports directing that an applicant for Access-A-Ride recertification submit correspondence from a licensed physician in lieu of an in-person assessment (A7766, McMahon/S356, Cooney)

CIDNY supports the amendment of the Public Authorities Law to add language that allows Access-A-Ride eligibility based on licensed healthcare providers' letters. CIDNY seeks passing of the bill with some caveats. CIDNY would like additional language that can further ensure that people with disabilities' assessment process is consistent with the intent of the American with Disabilities Act. Beyond having the provider's letter prevail, when more information is required, Access-A-Ride should contact the healthcare provider for clarification, stating that an individual's disability is progressive or permanent and no recertification is required. This should include individuals with invisible or non-physical disabilities. In-person assessments have proven to be costly. We see no need for assessment centers, but should the MTA think they are necessary, the MTA should present to the legislators, in public form, a report of the process, costs and research that supports its reasoning.

Updated bill language should also include this change for initial applications, not just recertifications. Paratransit agencies throughout New York State do not currently require in-person assessments and have proven that they are an unnecessary burden. Language should also state that an applicant may submit correspondence from an appropriately qualified licensed healthcare professional, such as any doctor of medicine or osteopathic medicine, chiropractor, psychologist, registered nurse, nurse practitioner, social worker, mental health counselor, physical therapist, occupational therapist, speech language pathologist, or qualified intellectual disability professional, licensed to practice in the State of New York, not just a physician. The current bill's language is limiting, and some applicants may have difficulty accessing care from a physician due to living conditions, factors related to their disability, or economic constraints. Broadening the range of qualified professionals who can verify a disability or functional limitation will make the process more equitable and ensure that people who genuinely need the service can be approved, while still relying on licensed, verifiable medical sources.

CIDNY supports establishing the green transition authority and establishing a for-hire vehicle improvement surcharge; appropriation (S5552A, Salazar/ A6635A, Gonzalez-Rojas)

CIDNY supports the passage of this bill, establishing a for-hire vehicle improvement surcharge to improve accessibility and reduce emissions in the for-hire vehicle industry. The current system lacks the funding, infrastructure, and incentives needed to provide sufficient wheelchair-accessible vehicles (WAV), particularly zero-emission WAVs,

leaving riders with disabilities with limited and unreliable transportation options. This bill rightly recognizes that accessibility must be a core component of any green transition, not an afterthought.

Revenue from the for-hire vehicle improvement surcharge would finance grants for vehicle retrofitting, zero-emission wheelchair-accessible vehicle deployment, and the development of charging and support infrastructure that meets the needs of accessible fleets. By expanding the availability of on-demand WAV service and investing in accessibility statewide, this legislation has the potential to reduce pressure on paratransit systems while also providing direct funding to improve paratransit service quality and reliability. CIDNY supports this bill because strengthening WAV availability and enhancing paratransit services promotes greater mobility, independence, and equity for people with disabilities across New York State.

Fiscal Implications:

This bill would cost the state \$10 million as an appropriation to the green transition authority from the general fund, but it is expected to generate over \$260 million from NYC-based trips alone for the authority to use. This bill would reduce the costly burden of climate change by transitioning for-hire vehicles to electric ones, and would also give for-hire vehicle drivers the option to transition to jobs that are higher paying and better for the environment, all of which would save the state money on things like health insurance and social assistance programs.

VOTING

CIDNY supports authorizing electronic submission of absentee ballots (S5729, Hoylman-Sigal/A5280, Epstein)

CIDNY supports Electronic Ballot Return, which would allow select groups, like blind voters, and voters with other print disabilities, as well as military service members or Americans living overseas, to receive, mark, and return their ballots electronically, without needing to print paper ballots. Under the current accessible ballot system, voters with print disabilities can fill out their ballots online at home using a screen-reader device, but are still required to print ballots, sign oath envelopes, and mail or return ballots in-person to their local Board of Elections offices. This defeats the independent and private purpose of accessible ballots, specifically for blind voters who may need assistance with the signing and mailing process, and those who do not have an at-home printer. Electronic Ballot Return is already being used both securely and

successfully by the military and overseas voters in 32 states. Thirteen states also permit voters with disabilities to utilize Electronic Ballot Return.

CIDNY supports requiring mandatory training curriculum for election commissioners and key staff of boards of elections (S1035, Myrie/A1228 Seawright)

CIDNY supports the establishment of a mandatory training curriculum created by the State Board of Elections, in consultation with election commissioners. This legislation would require newly appointed election commissioners and other Board of Elections staff to complete a training within six months of their appointment. It would also require other designated staff to complete continuing education on an annual basis. Failure to complete the training would result in notification to the County Legislature or City Council and the respective party chair. CIDNY supports this legislation because it ensures election commissioners are consistently trained to administer accessible elections. Inconsistent training at poll sites across the State disproportionately impacts people with disabilities, as their voting experiences often involve unique accessibility needs and assistive devices such as Ballot Marking Devices that require proper training to accommodate them effectively. By standardizing training statewide, this bill would improve accessibility for voters with disabilities throughout New York.

Fiscal Implications: None.

CIDNY supports requiring certain elections of public officials to occur on even-numbered years (A8668, Walker/S347, Skoufis)

CIDNY supports this bill, which would amend various New York State laws to mandate that elections for certain public officials be held exclusively in even-numbered years, aligning them with general elections. The bill aims to consolidate elections for city, county, and some judicial officers, to reduce the frequency of off-cycle elections and increase voter turnout. CIDNY believes this will benefit people with disabilities who face barriers to participating in multiple elections throughout the year. Fewer elections would allow resources to be focused on improving poll site accessibility and accommodations. Additionally, the bill would enable CIDNY to enhance voter education and outreach efforts and reduce confusion among voters. Instead of dedicating resources repeatedly to educate voters about multiple election dates and processes, organizations like CIDNY could concentrate on one comprehensive campaign, ensuring voters are well-informed and engaged for a single, larger turnout. This legislation would provide voters with disabilities a more streamlined and less confusing process, making it easier for them to participate fully in the democratic process.

Fiscal Implications: None. In fact, consolidating elections into even-numbered years is likely to reduce overall administrative costs by eliminating repeated expenditures related to staffing poll sites, printing ballots, securing and maintaining voting equipment, and operating accessible machines across multiple off-cycle elections.

CIDNY supports requiring a board of inspectors to deliver and help complete applications for absentee ballots to residents of nursing homes and senior citizen residences (A1551, Weprin/S4229, Comrie)

CIDNY supports this bill as it ensures greater accessibility and equity in absentee voting for residents of nursing homes and senior citizen residences. By requiring election inspectors to provide absentee ballot applications and assistance to residents who request them, this legislation addresses the unique challenges faced by seniors and individuals with disabilities in accessing their right to vote. The provision to supply additional ballots and ensure prompt delivery of district-specific absentee ballots increases the inclusivity of the voting process, especially for residents registered in different election districts. CIDNY believes that expanding support for absentee voting in these facilities both empowers vulnerable populations and strengthens New York's commitment to accessible and inclusive elections for all.

CIDNY opposes the Voter Integrity Verification Act (A6287, Cunningham/S7116, Cleare)

CIDNY **opposes** this bill as currently written due to language requiring ballots to be returned exclusively on paper, which would prohibit current and future use of accessible electronic ballot return. This restriction would disproportionately harm voters with disabilities who would rely on electronic ballot return to vote privately and independently, and would inhibit accessibility progress in New York. CIDNY is open to an amended version of the bill that strengthens election security without eliminating accessible technology and specifically urges removal or revision of the provision requiring ballots to be submitted solely on physical paper.