



Respect and Dignity for All: Make the Road New York's 2019 State Platform

As the largest not-for-profit democratic immigrant organization in New York State, with more than 23,000 members, MRNY is uniquely positioned to identify and address pressing community needs. Through its network of community centers in New York City, Long Island and Westchester, MRNY employs a multi-faceted approach to supporting immigrant and low-income New Yorkers, providing a full range of legal, educational and survival services. In this legislative session, immigrants and working-class people of color need bold action to protect immigrants, expand opportunity for youth, end the school to prison pipeline, rein in abusive policing, make the \$15 minimum wage real, and reclaim our democracy from billionaire donors.

Top 2019 State Budget & Policy Priorities

(■ = item has budget implications)

1. PROTECT IMMIGRANT NEW YORKERS FACING ATTACKS FROM WASHINGTON

The Trump administration has declared war on immigrant communities. Trump has acted to end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Temporary Protected Status (TPS), while also ramping up Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) efforts to criminalize immigrants and separate families. Any interaction with the criminal justice system, including minor driving violations, are used as a pretext for detention and deportation. New York must respond by acting to:

■ **Expand NYS TAP (Tuition Assistance Program) to cover Dreamers** – The New York DREAM Act would allow undocumented students who meet the criteria to apply for state financial aid that is currently available to others, such as the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). California, Texas, New Mexico and Minnesota have passed similar bills. Dream is a critical pathway to provide tuition equity and equal opportunity to undocumented youth in our state.

■ **Restore Drivers Licenses for All** – New York currently prevents hundreds of thousands of otherwise-qualified New Yorkers from obtaining a license because of immigration status. This puts many people who *must drive* to work, take kids to school, or get to the doctor, at risk of traffic stops that can lead to arrest and deportation. New York must restore access to driver's licenses to all, which will also create a reliable revenue stream and enhance public safety by allowing all drivers to obtain insurance coverage.

■ **Ensure Immigrant Health Care Access** – The state should allocate \$532 Million to create a state-funded Essential Plan for ALL New Yorkers up to 200% of the federal poverty level. This will include approximately 110,000 New Yorkers who are currently excluded from health insurance because of their immigration status. Also, as the Trump Administration is ending Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for thousands of New Yorkers, New York State should offer state-funded Medicaid to TPS holders who are losing their protection. At the same time, we support a comprehensive solution, such as the New York Health Act to improve the affordability of health coverage.

2. CLOSE RENT STABILIZATION LOOPHOLES & EXTEND RENTER PROTECTIONS STATEWIDE

Over the 20th century, New Yorkers across the state have benefited from various forms of rent control to protect tenants from unjust evictions and arbitrary rent increases. But that system has been eroded: it now only applies to 8 counties, and has loopholes that encourage tenant harassment and allow sudden, permanent rent hikes. Since 1994, we have lost nearly 300,000 units of affordable housing. 5 million New Yorkers have no renter protections whatsoever. Every tenant in New York, no matter where they live, deserves the same basic

protections. In 2019, New York State's renter protections – commonly known as rent stabilization – will expire, creating a moment to strengthen and expand tenant protections.

Repeal the eviction bonus provision, Implement “Preferential Rent” reform and Eliminate permanent rent hikes caused by MCI’s and IAI’s: Currently landlords of rent stabilized units receive an “eviction bonus” – the ability to raise rents 20% if they evict tenants. We must eliminate the perverse incentive to harass or push lawful tenants out. Preferential rent abuse is also facilitating gentrification and the eviction of long-term tenants. The state must limit preferential lease renewal increases to the same percentage increase allowed for standard lease renewals. Upgrading building systems (MCI’s) and Individual apartment finishes (IAI’s) are also responsible for the cost of rent rising dramatically. MCI and IAI reforms must be passed to ensure these loopholes aren’t used as a pretext for permanent rent hikes.

Pass new “good cause” eviction legislation to bring renters’ rights to tenants in smaller buildings and in manufactured home communities: Rent stabilization only applies to buildings with 6 or more units. But more and more, large corporate landlords are buying up smaller buildings, and tenants who live in them face escalating rents and displacement. In gentrifying parts of New York City, like East New York and Bushwick, the housing stock is overwhelmingly smaller buildings. As the housing affordability crisis seeps out of New York City and into the suburbs, it is imperative that we bring rent relief to smaller buildings as these residents increasingly come under threat of displacement. Good cause eviction would bring the right to a renewal lease at limited rent increases set by a local price index to all tenants.

3. END THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

The Trump administration seeks to criminalize black and brown people, particularly youth. The administration has reversed efforts to reform the criminal justice system, which has for decades fueled a school-to-prison pipeline. And, on Long Island, Trump and Jeff Sessions have used local tragedy as a pretext for labeling immigrant youth as gang members and increasing immigration enforcement. In the meantime, state and local officials have been complicit in further criminalizing youth, including the Governor’s decision to send state troopers to Long Island schools. New York must respond by acting to end the school-to-prison pipeline:

■ **Pass the Safe and Supportive Schools Act** to end harsh disciplinary practices that are disproportionately impacting youth of color and students with special needs. Statewide, 21% of all Black boys and 14% of all Black girls are suspended from school. Students with disabilities are more than 2 times as likely to be suspended and Black and Latinx students make up 42% of all students, but account for 71% of all students referred to law enforcement. The bill would ensure that school districts implement codes of conduct limiting the use of out of school suspensions as a disciplinary response to minor infractions, and encouraging the use of restorative justice approaches in discipline.

4. HALT POLICE ABUSE TARGETING COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

The Trump administration has rolled back racial justice and police accountability gains, pushing the message that police should be able to act with impunity. Discriminatory and abusive policing continues to criminalize low-income communities of color, including immigrants, LGBTQ people, youth and others. For our most vulnerable communities, police interactions have severe collateral consequences and serve as a pipeline to mass incarceration and deportation. Yet NYS is among the least transparent states when it comes to police misconduct, shielding abusive officers from public scrutiny and accountability. New York can act now to:

Repeal NYS CRL Section 50-a: Civil Rights Law 50-a (CRL 50-a) has created a broad mechanism for concealing crucial information about law enforcement conduct, including records of substantiated misconduct, from the public. New York’s 50-a statute is the most restrictive, in the nation, in spite of robust privacy protections that have been built into existing FOIL and FOIA law. 50-a must be repealed to provide much needed transparency on police discipline in New York state, and help address the systemic lack of accountability for officers’ who engage in misconduct.

Enact Special Prosecutor Legislation to codify and strengthen Executive Order 147 - Pass legislation that provides the Attorney General's office with jurisdiction in all cases of police killings and deaths in police custody, memorializing and strengthening EO147. The bill, if enacted, would help to ensure fair and thorough investigations and – when warranted – effective prosecutions in tragic incidents that the criminal justice system has historically failed to address. It would help to aid New York families in securing justice for the unjust deaths of their loved ones at the hands of police or in police custody, and advance police accountability and equal justice.

5. ReClaim our Democracy from Billionaire Donors: FairElex & Voting Rights

■ **Fair Elections:** To ensure that all New Yorkers' voices are heard in our political process, particularly in the face of the enormous sums spent by real estate and hedge fund tycoons to control our state, New York must adopt comprehensive campaign finance reforms that include a public financing system for all state and legislative races, as well as closing the LLC loophole.

Voting rights: adopt a package of reforms to let New Yorkers vote and modernize New York's antiquated election systems, including passing early voting, automatic voter registration, same day voter registration, and fully restoring parolees' voting rights.

6. Make the promise of \$15 an hour REAL for low wage workers & STOP the GIVEAWAY of nearly \$3 billion to AMAZON.

We call on the legislature to work with the Public Authorities Control Board to block the planned deal to grant nearly \$3 billion in subsidies and tax cuts to Amazon – a corporation notorious for creating poor working conditions and partnering with ICE, and headed by the wealthiest man in the world. Meanwhile, the NYS Department of Labor has so few resources that it cannot even enforce New York's much touted \$15 an hour minimum wage on behalf of our state's most vulnerable workers.

■ **Stop the deal to bring AMAZON's new corporate hub to Long Island City.** The proposed deal is offensive to Queens communities and the entire state by virtue of wasting desperately-needed resources, bypassing elected officials, as well as accelerating gentrification and further crowding local schools.

■ **Pass the EmPIRE Worker Protection Act & enforce wage theft laws.** New York must act to stop worker exploitation in ways that survive forced arbitration agreements. Immigrant workers are at particular risk now that many employers feel they can threaten immigrants with impunity. First, the NYS Department of Labor (DOL) is under-resourced, and nearly all of its funding comes from the federal government. Second, corporations' use of forced arbitration agreements is compelling workers to waive their right to go to court if they face illegal exploitation. The EmPIRE Worker Protection Act extends the DOL's reach by allowing workers and advocates to step in and represent the public, bringing actions to hold law-breaking employers accountable, and helping to fund the NYS DOL.

Additional Priorities Supported by Make the Road New York this year:

■ **Invest \$15.3m in NYSED Funding for Adult Literacy Education (ALE). (Maintain last year's \$7.8m investment and increase ALE by \$7.5 million).** Adult Education programs are critical to enabling New Yorkers to get and keep jobs, continue on their career paths and give parents tools to support their children's academic success. Changes to the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act have resulted in a **loss of funding for English Language and Civics instruction** in NYS- this funding has now transitioned to supporting a new Integrated English Literacy Program focused on post-secondary and employment outcomes for students. The requirement for programs to demonstrate employment outcomes in order to maintain WIOA Title II funding has **created a barrier for thousands of learners with lower levels of English language proficiency or lack of work authorization. ALE is one of the few state**

funding streams able to address the current and expected new need for flexible adult education services by supporting community-based English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE) and High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation programs. Expanding ALE would allow the State to help fill the gap created by changes to WIOA-funded programs.

■ **Fully fund the Community Health Advocates Program with \$6.5 million.** Community Health Advocates (CHA) provides one-on-one assistance to individuals across the state, helping individuals navigate the complex health system. CHA advocates troubleshoot the problems that individuals face post-enrollment and help individuals who are not eligible for insurance access low cost care and hospital financial assistance. CHA saves tax dollars – without the program individuals end up in expensive emergency room treatments.

■ **Prioritize resources for the 2020 Census.** With the Trump administration seeking to intimidate immigrant communities and failing to adequately prepare for the 2020 Census, New York must **invest at least \$40 million for community groups (in addition funds for state and local government outreach)** to conduct outreach to ensure a full, fair count. This outreach will prove critical to making sure every New Yorker is counted and that communities across the state receive the resources and political representation they deserve.

■ **Ensure funding for the Safety Net Hospitals and Indigent Care Pool funding.** The legislature should work with the Governor to find a solution that distributes these cuts more equitably and ensures adequate funding for safety net institutions. The state should not provide any additional transition period to hospitals for implementation of the new indigent care pool allocation formula. Additionally, we urge the state to reform the sequencing of the allocation of Disproportionate Share Hospital Funds so that true safety net hospitals draw these funds in advance of the wealthier private hospitals. MRNY supports the H+H/Community Coalition proposal that came out of the ICP workgroup.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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