



Respect and Dignity for All:

Make the Road New York's 2020 State Policy & Budget Platform

As the largest community based membership organization representing immigrants and working-class people of color in New York State, with 24,000 members, Make the Road New York (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, communities of color, and working-class New Yorkers, providing a full range of legal, educational and survival services. By the end of Spring 2020, we urge the Legislature and Governor Cuomo to implement the following critical priorities:

PROTECT IMMIGRANT NEW YORKERS FACING ATTACKS FROM WASHINGTON

■ Pass the **Protect Our Courts Act** (A02176A Solages | S00425 Hoylman) to prevent civil arrests and detentions by ICE inside and near New York courthouses. With the Trump administration's ongoing war on immigrant communities, New York must go further or make real our promise to stand with immigrant New Yorkers. This bill would require law enforcement officers to present a valid warrant or order *signed by a judge* before carrying out a civil arrest of any victim, defendant, witness, or loved one accompanying their family members to court.

■ **Ensure Immigrant Healthcare Access** (A5974 Gottfried | S3900 Rivera)– Allocate \$532 million to create a state-funded Essential Plan for all New Yorkers with income up to 200% of the federal poverty level, regardless of their immigration status . This will include New Yorkers who are currently excluded from health insurance because of their immigration status and those who may lose their insurance if they lose Temporary Protected Status. At the same time, we support a comprehensive solution, such as the New York Health Act to improve the affordability of health coverage.

EXTEND RENT PROTECTIONS STATEWIDE

■ **Pass new “good cause” eviction legislation to bring renters’ rights to tenants in smaller buildings** (A5030 Hunter | S2892 Salazar): Despite the major steps forward in the 2019 rent reforms, millions of tenants still have virtually no protections against horrific housing conditions, unfair eviction, and harassment. This is because rent stabilization only applies to buildings with 6 or more units. As large corporate landlords are increasingly buying up smaller buildings, tenants who live in them face escalating rents and displacement. 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 face displacement. Good cause eviction would bring the right to a renewal lease, at rent increases set by local price index, to all tenants.

END THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

■ **Pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act** (S0767 Montgomery) to end harsh and ineffective school disciplinary practices that disproportionately impact youth of color and students with disabilities. Outside of New York City, Black students are 10% of all students but 31% of all students suspended. In NYC, Black students are 23% of all students, but 50% of those suspended. Students with disabilities are more than 2 times as likely to be suspended. One suspension in high school can double the likelihood that a student drops out. New York's antiquated and racially biased school discipline policies are pushing marginalized students out of school and into the criminal legal system. Passage of this 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, reduce loss instructional time, and encourage the use of restorative justice and positive alternatives to suspensions.

DECRIMINALIZE COMMUNITIES. INCREASE POLICE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

■ **Repeal NYS CRL Section 50-a** (A2513 O'Donnell | S3695 Bailey): 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** (A1601 Perry | S2574 Bailey): this legislation provides the Attorney General's office with jurisdiction in all cases of police killings and deaths in police custody, memorializing and strengthening Executive Order 147. 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.

■ **Repeal "Walking While Trans" Ban** (A654 Paulin | S2253 Hoylman): Section 240.37 – "Loitering for the purpose of engaging in a prostitution offense" – causes irreparable harm to transgender, gender non-binary, gender-expansive and queer communities of color in New York, particularly transgender woman of color, because it gives the police excessive discretion and emboldens biased policing. MRNY members have shared stories about being arrested for merely standing outside, speaking to one another, or walking from the subway to their home. Section 240.37 is particularly harmful because of possible immigration consequences that can lead to deportation as a result of biased policing.

■ **Stop Violence in the Sex Trades Act (SVSTA)** (A8230 Gottfried | S6419 Salazar): People who trade sex or who identify as sex workers, whether as a form of survival or as a choice, have historically been harassed and criminalized by the police. Those most impacted are Black and undocumented transgender women, because of a criminal record that continues to bar them from access to opportunities and can result in deportation. This legislation will amend NY Penal Law article 230 for consenting adults who trade sex for resources and/or money. It will decriminalize the action of collaborating with peers, patronizing adult sex workers, allow a working space where business are permitted. This bill upholds all anti-trafficking statuses that protect survivors and minors from exploitation and coercion.

MAKE THE WORKER PROTECTIONS ON OUR BOOKS REAL

■ **Make the promise of a \$15 minimum wage real by passing the EmPIRE Worker Protection Act** (A2265 Joyner | S1848 Hoylman) **to help enforce wage theft and equal pay laws.** 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. Second, corporations' use of forced arbitration agreements is compelling workers to waive their right to be heard by a judge and jury if their employer breaks the law and exploits them. New York State cannot ban the use of forced arbitration agreements. But we CAN make improve the public's ability to hold law-breakers accountable. 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.

RECLAIM OUR DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMY FROM BILLIONAIRES

■ **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. The legislature and Governor should insist that the Public Financing Commission pass a strong package with a statewide public matching system for all elections with at least a 6:1 ratio, reduced contribution limits, and independent enforcement. The Commission should also not enact any changes to the fusion voting system. Should the commission fall short, legislators must act immediately to ensure that New York has a system that includes these best practices.

■ **Voting rights:** New York must swiftly adopt automatic voter registration (S1278 Gianaris) to continue New York's progress toward letting New Yorkers vote and modernizing New York's antiquated election systems. The state should also fully restore parolees' voting rights.

■ **Revenue:** Albany leaders should pass a package of revenue measures to generate \$30 billion for state coffers by demanding that ultra-wealthy New Yorkers and corporations pay their fair share. These measures should include, but not be limited to, an ultra-millionaires tax, billionaires tax, carried interest fairness fee, and a tax on corporations whose CEOs earn more than 35 times their average employee pay.

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

■ **Invest \$25m in NYSED Funding for Adult Literacy Education (ALE): Maintain last year's \$7.8m investment and increase ALE by \$17.2 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 (WIOA) have resulted in a loss of funding for English Language and Civics instruction in New York State — 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 \$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.

■ **Restore Article VI matching funding rate for New York City to 36%:** restore the rate from its current 20%, to ensure that critical municipal public health programs are matched equally across the state. The FY2020 state budget cut the matching rate only for NYC, representing a \$65 million hit to life-saving programs until the city temporarily backfilled the funding to sustain the investment in providers and small community-based organizations. The state should restore the matching rate to 36% and recommit to supporting all municipal public health programs across the state.

■ **Pass The Patient Medical Debt Protection Act (A8639 | S6757):** require hospitals to provide one itemized bill in a timely manner, cap the interest charged for medical debt at 3% instead of 9%, and reduce the deadline hospitals have to sue patients from six years to just two. This bill would also make hospitals provide a transparent application and appeal process for patients eligible for discounts, prevent patients from being charged for facility fees, and hold community members harmless for out-of-network bills caused by plan or provider misinformation.

■ **Modify payments to safety-net hospitals: (A6677-A | S5546):** end the Indigent Care Pool transition collar and allocate Disproportionate Share Hospital and Indigent Care Pool funding to true safety-net hospitals and the patients they serve.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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