



Respect and Dignity for All:

Make the Road New York's 2021 State Policy Post-Budget Platform

As the largest community based membership organization representing immigrants and working-class people of color in New York, Make the Road New York (MRNY) is uniquely positioned to identify and address pressing community needs. Through its community centers in New York City, Long Island and Westchester, MRNY employs a multi-faceted approach to supporting immigrants, communities of color, and working-class New Yorkers, providing a full range of legal, educational and survival services.

MRNY and partners across the state won three landmark victories this budget cycle: a fund for excluded workers, rent relief, and an increase in taxes of the wealthiest New Yorkers to fund public education and other vital services. With the budget behind us, the following are our top priorities through the end of the session.

RECOVERY FOR ALL

■ **Fund Excluded Workers Implementation:** After the creation of a first-in-the-nation \$2.1 billion fund for workers excluded from unemployment and all income relief, the state legislature must ensure that the money quickly lands in constituents' pockets. The New York Department of Labor must ensure as many excluded workers as possible can access the highest level of benefits. The state must significantly resource a system for enrollment and distribution of funds and address barriers to relief.

■ **COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program of 2021 (CERAP):** The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) must ensure that tenants left behind in this pandemic can access rent relief in a fair and timely manner. Considering the implementation issues with last summer's \$100 million rental assistance program, OTDA must prioritize a simple application process.

ADVANCE JUSTICE and STRENGTHEN CIVIL RIGHTS PROTECTIONS

■ **Pass the Solutions Not Suspensions Act (Nolan)** to end harsh and ineffective school disciplinary practices that disproportionately impact youth of color and students with disabilities. New York's antiquated, racially biased school discipline policies are pushing marginalized students out of school and into the criminal legal system. Outside of NYC, 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 twice as likely to be suspended. One suspension in high school can double the likelihood that a student drops out. This bill would ensure that school districts implement codes of conduct limiting the use of suspensions as a disciplinary response to minor infractions, reduce loss of instructional time, and encourage the use of restorative justice and positive alternatives to suspensions.

■ **Stop Violence in the Sex Trades Act (SVSTA)** (S3075 Salazar | A849 Gottfried): 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 brown, 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, and allow a working space where business are permitted. This bill upholds all anti-trafficking statuses that protect survivors and minors from exploitation and coercion.

■ **Pass the EMPIRE State Licensing Act (Rivera | A1952 Cruz)** to prevent immigrant New Yorkers from being denied a professional, occupational, commercial, or business license, permit, certificate, or registration on account of their immigration or citizenship status.

ENSURE HEALTHCARE ACCESS DURING AND BEYOND COVID-19

■ **Ensure Immigrant Healthcare Access** (Gottfried A880 | Rivera S1572) and implement a comprehensive solution in the **New York Health Act** (Rivera S5474 | Gottfried A6058). Through A880/S1572, 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 would immediately provide coverage to immigrants not eligible for insurance due to their immigration status, while working towards implementing the New York Health Act, a comprehensive solution to make health care affordable to all, regardless of immigration status. The New York Health Act would guarantee comprehensive health coverage to everyone, regardless of immigration status, providing everyone with affordable, quality healthcare including vision, dental, hearing, reproductive health, substance use treatment, mental health and long-term care and support services, while removing financial barriers to healthcare.

■ **Pass the Patient Medical Debt Protection Act** (Rivera S3057 | Gottfried A10538 & Rivera S2521A | Gottfried A3470A). Pass A10538/S3057, a component of the Patient Medical Debt Protection Act (PMDPA), which would cap the interest rate that can be charged in medical debt court cases at the federal funds rate, much lower than the 9% currently charged by some New York hospitals. Enact the full PMDPA, which would require all hospitals to: modernize and standardize hospital financial assistance forms and policies, provide one clear itemized bill, hold individuals harmless for surprise bills resulting from plan and provider misinformation, disclose and limit the imposition of facility fees, outlaw patient financial liability waivers and limit the interest rate that can be imposed in medical debt cases.

KEEP NEW YORKERS IN THEIR HOMES

■ **Pass new “good cause” eviction legislation to bring renters’ rights to tenants in smaller buildings** (Salazar | Hunter): With the pandemic eviction moratorium set to expire at the end of August, millions of tenants will 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 buy up smaller buildings, tenants face escalating rents and displacement. It is imperative that we bring rent relief to smaller buildings. Good cause eviction would bring the right to a renewal lease, at rent increases set by local price index, to all tenants.

PROTECT WORKERS

■ **Make the promise of a \$15 minimum wage real by passing the EMPIRE Worker Protection Act** (Hoylman | Joyner) **to help enforce wage theft and equal pay laws.** COVID has resulted in workers desperate for income being left almost entirely without relief. First, the NYS Department of Labor (DOL) is overwhelmed. 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 illegally exploits them. New York State cannot ban forced arbitration agreements. But we CAN 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, helping to fund the NYS DOL.