

# FREEDOM TO STAY,



# FREEDOM TO THRIVE

**MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK'S  
2024-2025 STATE POLICY PLATFORM**



# INTRODUCTION

New York State faces an out-of-control housing and affordability crisis. Rents and the cost of food and basic necessities have risen dramatically in recent years, and wages and support from the state government have not kept pace. Meanwhile, millions of New Yorkers remain unjustly excluded from tenant protections and key safety net programs like health insurance and unemployment. The result: families are pushed out of their homes and neighborhoods, leading to rampant displacement and the highest homelessness levels in New York State since the Great Depression. Governor Kathy Hochul has no plan to address this crisis. We do.

New Yorkers are living the consequences of decades of inaction to ensure safe, affordable housing for all. For the past two years, the state's response to the continued housing crisis and the arrival of new New Yorkers has been woefully inadequate. Time and time again, the Governor in particular has catered to the whims of real estate tycoons who see our homes as ATMs, trying to squeeze as much money out of us as possible – raising rents, refusing to make basic repairs, tearing neighborhoods apart, and turning communities into playgrounds for the wealthy. The Governor and legislative leaders can and must now stand up and deliver for tenants and working families.

No matter where you live, when you arrived here, or where you're from, every New Yorker deserves an affordable, comfortable, and safe home. Homes are for rest, family, and community. It's where we watch our kids take their first steps. It's where our loved ones gather around the kitchen table to share meals and to celebrate. It's where we unwind every day after a long, hard day of work.

We all deserve homes and neighborhoods where we have the ***freedom to stay and the freedom to thrive***. New Yorkers must be able to **stay in their homes and our communities**. And **we must be able to thrive**, with good-paying jobs, great public schools, and a strong safety net available to all.

This includes all of us—those who have lived here for decades, and the newest New Yorkers who have become our neighbors over the past two years. To achieve this, our state government must ensure that the wealthiest New Yorkers and corporations finally pay what they owe in taxes.

As the largest community-based, membership organization representing immigrants and working-class people of color in New York State, with 27,000 members, Make the Road New York (MRNY) is uniquely positioned to identify and address pressing community needs. Through our 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.

Our 2024-25 state policy platform centers on smart solutions to address the persistent inequities across our state and improve the lives of immigrant, Black, and brown families across New York State. Governor Hochul and the legislature should enact the policies in this *Freedom to Stay, Freedom to Thrive* platform to help ensure that all New Yorkers are treated with the respect and dignity we deserve.

**(Note: ➤ indicates budget-focused items.)**

# TAX THE RICH, HOUSE THE PEOPLE

## **PASS “GOOD CAUSE” EVICTION LEGISLATION**

**(Salazar S305 | Hunter A4454)**

Approximately 5 million tenants in small homes have no protections against unjust evictions. As large corporate landlords buy up smaller buildings, tenants face escalating rents and displacement. It is imperative that we bring basic protections to tenants in smaller buildings. Good cause eviction legislation would enable tenants to organize for the living conditions they deserve, and protect tenants from exorbitant rent increases, which often are effectively the same as an eviction notice.

## **➤ CREATE THE HOUSING ACCESS VOUCHER PROGRAM**

**(Kavanagh S568A | Rosenthal A4021)**

New York’s homelessness and affordability crisis continues to grow, and New York City in particular has also received thousands of asylum seekers in need of housing. The proposed program would allocate \$250 million for Housing Access Vouchers, setting aside 50% of the vouchers created for households at risk of homelessness and 50% for homeless individuals and families. These resources would allow the state to begin to roll out the program and move the shelter residents who have been in the system the longest to permanent housing. Voucher recipients would contribute a maximum of 30% of their monthly adjusted income towards rent and the rest would be covered by the voucher. It would also be accessible to all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, a first in the state.



# TAX THE RICH, HOUSE THE PEOPLE

## ➤ SAFEGUARD THE RIGHT TO SHELTER

State leaders must begin by recognizing that our state constitution enshrines this right. The State should invest in making sure that the right to shelter is protected for all people, regardless of their race, zip code, or national origin. The Right to Shelter remains crucial for avoiding the mass street homelessness seen elsewhere in the country. The alternative—relegating people to life in the streets—is in no one's interest.

## ➤ PASS THE INVEST IN OUR NEW YORK PACKAGE

**(Corporate Tax, Hoylman S1980 | Kelles, Shrestha A3690; Progressive Income Tax, Jackson S2059 | Meeks A3115; Capital Gains Tax, Rivera S2162 | Kim A2576; Mark-to-market Billionaires Tax, Ramos S1570 | Kelles A3252; Heirs Tax, Brisport S2782 | Solages A3193)**

The Invest in Our New York Act is a package of state bills that would raise tens of billions of dollars to ensure we can take care of each other and rebuild our economy by ending tax breaks for the wealthiest New Yorkers. This revenue will prove crucial to invest in the creation of affordable housing, ensure quality education, jobs, and care, and stop efforts to take away vital public programs for New Yorkers.



# ENSURE ALL NEW YORKERS ARE FREE TO THRIVE

## ➤ **ENSURE IMMIGRANT HEALTHCARE ACCESS (COVERAGE4ALL)**

**(Rivera S2237B | Gonzalez-Rojas  
A3020B)**

The state should expand the Essential Plan to all income-eligible New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status. Roughly 255,000 New Yorkers remain uninsured because of their immigration status. The Coverage4All bill would open the Essential Plan to cover New Yorkers earning up to 250% of the federal poverty level with health insurance regardless of immigration status. This would occur through a federal section 1332 waiver, which could secure federal funding for the entirety of this coverage extension, while allowing the Commissioner of Health to set guardrails for the expansion. Passing Coverage4All is a critical step towards achieving universal coverage, which we support through the New York Health Act.

## ➤ **CREATE THE UNEMPLOYMENT BRIDGE PROGRAM**

**(Ramos S3192 | Reyes A4821)**

New York should establish a permanent unemployment insurance program that can be accessed by excluded workers who currently contribute to social safety net programs, but are excluded from unemployment insurance. A \$500 million investment will create the Unemployment Bridge Program, which will provide up to \$1200/month in economic support to workers ineligible for unemployment. Prime beneficiaries will be immigrant workers without authorization, cash economy workers, freelancers and people in re-entry people. This program can serve up to 50,000 people per month. This program will be funded through an innovative revenue source - a Digital Ad Tax (DATA), which anticipates close to \$1 billion in annual revenue.





# ENSURE ALL NEW YORKERS ARE FREE TO THRIVE

## PASS THE SOLUTIONS NOT SUSPENSIONS ACT

**(Solages A5691)**

This bill would 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. Black students in New York are more than four times as likely to be suspended from school than their white counterparts. This leads to the loss of critical instructional time and ultimately more students dropping out. This bill would ensure that school districts implement codes of conduct that limit the use of suspensions as a disciplinary response to minor infractions, reduce loss of instructional time, and encourage the use of restorative practices and positive alternatives to suspensions.

## PASS THE STOP VIOLENCE IN THE SEX TRADES ACT (SVSTA)

**(Salazar S4396)**

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 on the job by the police. The most impacted people are Black and brown, undocumented transgender and cisgender women whose criminalization leads to obstacles to accessing city and state based programs, and whose criminalization can also result in a deportation. This legislation will amend NY Penal Law article 230 to decriminalize the sale and purchase of sexual services for resources, services and/or money for consenting adults. This legislation will allow for sex workers to have safer working environments, consistent with a harm reduction approach. It will also vacate the records of those who have been arrested, convicted and/or incarcerated for engaging in sex work no longer criminalized.



# ENSURE ALL NEW YORKERS ARE FREE TO THRIVE

## ➤ MAINTAIN 100% OF FOUNDATION AID TO ALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

New York needs to update the Foundation Aid Formula to fully capture the current cost of educating students. State leaders must provide the State Education Department with the resources to engage with education finance experts to evaluate and revise the Foundation Aid formula, while maintaining the principles of equity and engaging parents, students, teachers and community members. With substantial federal aid ending, the state must also keep districts whole, with the resources needed for all students to thrive.

## ➤ INCREASE ADULT LITERACY EDUCATION FUNDING FUNDING TO \$27.9 MILLION

There are 3.9 million adult New Yorkers with limited English proficiency or without a high school diploma, and less than two percent are able to access state-funded adult literacy classes each year. And thousands of the newest New Yorkers need English language support to transition into the workforce. To expand and improve vital adult literacy programs, the state should renew current Adult Literacy Education funding (ALE) at \$9.3 million to keep programs whole; invest an additional \$9.3 million in FY25 for the ALE Stabilization and Enhancement Fund to begin to stabilize and enhance ALE programs by increasing the rate per student and allowing providers to better serve the 6,600 New Yorkers enrolled; and invest an additional \$9.3 million in FY25 to reach and serve an additional 3,300 students at an increased rate per student.

