2019 NEW YORK STATE ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAY

OVERALL ASK

We must invest much more substantially in programs in our state budget which aid the poor and middle class and address systemic racism in New York. The levels of poverty in New York State are completely unacceptable. New York’s taxation, spending and community investment policies pose significant burdens for most New Yorkers:

For example:

➢ We have seen a 32% cut in human service programs in the state budget since 2011.

➢ Child poverty in many of our cities and rural communities approaches 50%.

➢ Human service workers, who are already receiving low wages, have not received a cost of living adjustment in 10 years.

➢ Corporate donations from real estate, health care, and Wall Street interests skew our electoral process and lead us to make costly state budget decisions which may or may not help our citizens but pander to special interests. Elected office is often inaccessible to people of modest means unless they can garner corporate money.

➢ While we underfund efforts to alleviate poverty and starve assistance to local and county governments, especially in rural and tax burdened communities, we allocate 10 billion a year on economic development efforts which are many times corruption ridden and not cost effective.

➢ We have more billionaires in New York than any other state and have seen a 72% increase in millionaires since imposition of a millionaire’s tax. Millionaire’s are not leaving the state.

➢ Low- and moderate-income homeowners and renters in every part of the state might be more inclined to leave state because they pay too high a percentage of their income on high property taxes or higher rent because of property taxes on landlords which they pass on to renters.
Towards this end we must:

1. Eliminate the 2% spending cap on state budget funding.

2. Ask that multi-millionaires and billionaires pay to the state a fraction of the massive windfall that they received from the Federal Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017.

The Fiscal Policy Institute [WWW.Fiscalpolicy.org](http://WWW.Fiscalpolicy.org) suggests the following revenue raisers over and above what has been proposed by the Governor:

- Add tiers to the millionaire’s tax to tax higher rate people earning an income of 5 million, 10 million and 100 million or more.
- Impose a stock buyback tax
- Impose a “Pied-à-Terre” tax on luxury homeowners’ residential property which they do not use as a primary residence.
- Impose a Mortgage Recording Tax which currently applies to mortgages but not people buying property with cash.
- Collect a real-estate transfer tax on high end dwellings
- Recapture—Unincorporated Business Tax (UBT)

3. Offer substantial property tax relief to New Yorker’s by the state picking up Medicaid costs, a higher percentage of education costs, and financing of unfunded mandates which are cost shifted to towns and counties.

4. Revisit how we spend 10 billion in economic development money while moving away from big corporate subsidies towards bottom up investments and support of local infrastructure and “green” projects. At minimum, we need a “database of deals” to disclose the performance of corporate subsidies.

5. Passage of remaining election reforms and the public financing of campaigns.

CARE OF CREATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The Climate and Community Protection Act

We ask for passage of the Climate and Community Protection Act (S. 7971 introduced by Senator Hoylman and A. 0342 introduced by Assembly member Englebright)

The Climate and Community Protection Act mandates New York State's move to renewable energy.

While Governor Cuomo has articulated strong clean energy goals, and dedicated hundreds of millions of dollars toward making those goals a reality in his Green New Deal presentation in January, the Climate and Community Protection Act will establish legislative targets for helping to achieve these goals.

The bill seeks to create regulations to reduce “greenhouse gas emissions from all anthropogenic sources 100 percent over 1990 levels by the year 2050, with an incremental target of at least a 50 percent reduction in climate pollution by the year 2030.” The bill will create the New York State Climate Action Council and promote environmental justice across the state by directing resources toward disadvantaged populations where fossil fuel plants are often sited. Investment in disadvantaged communities is essential to ensure that there is clean energy infrastructure in place that allows disadvantaged people to affordably access clean energy.

For expanded explanations go to www.nyrenews.org.

Divest Fossil Fuel Stocks from state pension funds.

We ask for passage of the “Fossil Fuel Divestment Act.” (S2992 introduced by Senator Kruger and A3876 introduced by Assembly member Ortiz)

This legislation would require the State Comptroller to divest the New York State Common Retirement Fund from all holdings in the 200 largest publicly traded fossil fuel companies, as defined by carbon content in the companies’ proven oil, gas, and coal reserves (the CU 200). Divestment from coal companies would be completed within one year; divestment from all other fossil fuel companies would be completed by January 1, 2020.

For expanded explanations go to WWW.gofossilfree.org
IMMIGRATION AND LABOR

Separation of Children Accountability Response Act (SCAR Act)

We ask for passage of the Separation of Children Accountability Response (SCAR) Act (S0222 introduced by Senator Benjamin and Assembly 01436 introduced by Assembly Member Epstein) which requires authorized agencies to report on unaccompanied alien children under such agencies' care; provides that a person who knowingly submits false information shall be guilty of offering a false instrument for filing; provides that the commissioner of social services may deny, revoke, or terminate an authorized agency's existing licensure or registration for failure to report such information in the prescribed time frame.

For expanded explanations go to: WWW.newsanctuarycoalition.nationbuilder.com/seasonofjustice.

Driver’s Licenses for Undocumented Immigrants

We ask the legislature to pass the “Green light” bill (A03675 introduced by Assembly member Crespo and S07147) introduced by Senator Sepulveda ensuring that New York’s “Standard” licenses be accessible to all state residents, regardless of immigration status.

For expanded explanations go to WWW.greenlightnewyork.org

A sign on letter from faith leaders in support of SCAR and the Greenlight bill can be found at WWW.interfaithcenter.org

Farm Worker Bill

We call on our legislators to enact the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act, granting collective bargaining rights, workers' compensation and unemployment benefits to farmworkers. The bill is Senate 2837 introduced by Senator Jessica Ramos and Assembly Bill A2750 introduced by Assemblywoman Cathy Nolan.

For more explanations go to WWW.ruralmigrantministry.org
CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Community Supervision Revocation Reform Act

Community Supervision Revocation Reform Act (S.1343 introduced by Senator Benjamin and A.5493 introduced by Assembly Member William Moseley) stops use of incarceration for technical violations. Incarceration would be eliminated as a sanction for most technical violations. Certain technical violations could still result in jail time, but it would be capped at a maximum of 30 days.

Providing earned time credits. People under community supervision would be eligible to earn 30-day “earned time credits” reduction in their community supervision period for every 30-day period in which they do not violate a condition of supervision.

Bolstering due process. Persons under community supervision shall be afforded a recognizance hearing in a local criminal court before they are detained, pending adjudication of an alleged violation of their conditions of release, whether a technical violation or a new criminal charge is alleged.

Provide speedy hearings. Persons under community supervision shall be afforded a speedy adjudicatory hearing upon an alleged violation of their conditions of release.

Reinvesting savings. Savings from these reforms will be captured and used to fund costs related to implementation of the legislation and reinvested in non-profit organizations for affordable and supportive housing; treatment programs for substance abuse and mental health issues; and employment, education, and training services for those remaining under community supervision.

For expanded explanations on the Less is More Bill go to www.katalcenter.org.

Discovery, Elimination of Cash Bail, and Speedy Trial

We call on our legislators to take some strong steps towards significantly reducing the number of people in our state who are incarcerated. Towards this end we seek:

1. Meaningful bail reform

Everyone accused of a crime is supposed to be innocent until proven guilty. But in New York, because of our laws and the way they are carried out, untold New Yorkers are denied this basic right.

Each year, tens of thousands of New Yorkers are faced with only two options when they’re arrested: plead guilty to a crime or stay locked up in jail often because they can’t afford to pay their way out.

We believe the time for meaningful bail reform is now. Governor Cuomo has a bail reform proposal in his Executive Budget, the Senate has proposed a bill, and we look forward to seeing
the Assembly proposal soon. Our legislators have a real and rare opportunity to make our criminal justice system more fair and humane right now:

- We call for elimination of cash bail for all crimes.
- Dramatically and safely reduce the number of people in jail.
- Guarantee pre-trial liberty for as many people as possible, under the least restrictive supervision as possible.
- Ensure robust due process for those who are eligible for pre-trial detention.
- Reducing mass incarceration in NY State is a nonpartisan, human rights issue that will increase public safety, reduce taxpayer costs, and uphold our country’s sacred commitment to the presumption of innocence.

2. Discovery Reform

We ask for discovery laws for the right of a defendant to “discover” well in advance the evidence against them so that they can mount a proper defense and/or determine with all the facts whether or not to accept a plea bargain or proceed with trial.

When it comes time to fight their case in court, New Yorkers don’t get a fair chance. No one should plead guilty without knowing why they are accused of a crime or the evidence against them, but that is what is happening right now because of New York’s flawed discovery law.

3. Speedy Trial

We ask for passage of legislation which speeds up the time one has to wait for a trial. Our speedy trial law must be fixed so that every person accused of a crime gets a firm trial date—a date they can rely on that will not be dictated by prosecutors or by a crowded court calendar.

Our state’s speedy trial law drags out a defendant’s case. The Constitution guarantees a right to a speedy trial, but, waiting for your trial in New York—even for a low-level offense—can take years.

For expanded explanations and sign on letters go to WWW.nyscoc.org, WWW.justleadershipusa.org/campaign/freenewyork and WWW.Katalcentr.org
ANTI POVERTY EFFORTS
HOME STABILITY SUPPORT AND EXPANDING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Home Stability Support Act

We ask for passage of Home Stability Support (HSS) Introduced by Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi (A01620) and Senator Liz Krueger (S02375) which will be a new statewide rent supplement for families and individuals who are eligible for public assistance benefits and who are facing eviction, homelessness, or loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous living conditions. HSS will be 100% federally and state-funded and will replace all existing optional rent supplements.

The rent supplements will be a bridge between the current shelter allowance and 85% of the fair market rent determined by HUD. Local districts will have the option to further raise the supplement up to 100% of the fair market rent at local expense.

To address the fact that the heating allowance has not been increased in 30 years, and assistance currently available doesn’t go far enough to help pay for heat, HSS will have a heating differential for homes that do not include heat in the rent.

For expanded explanations go to WWW.Homestabilitysupport.com

Health Care Reform

1. We ask that the Legislature reject Governor Cuomo’s proposed cuts to Medicaid.

2. Support necessary steps to guarantee health care and long-term care to all New Yorkers by moving towards passage of the New York Health Act.

3. Because of its robust implementation of the Affordable Care Act, New York has succeeded in cutting the number of uninsured people in half since 2010, now down to less than 5%. Despite this remarkable feat, there are still 1.1 million uninsured New Yorkers. As we build on the state’s accomplishments and set New York on a path towards universal coverage, we urge the Governor and Legislature to take the following steps this year:

Health Coverage for All Low-Income Immigrants

While many immigrants in New York have benefited from the Affordable Care Act, other immigrants make up a disproportionate share of New Yorkers still without health insurance. Some undocumented immigrants in New York are eligible for Medicaid (pregnant women) or Child Health Plus (children under 19), but over 400,000 New Yorkers remain uninsured because of their immigration status.
Two measures could help:

➢ Expanded Essential Plan Eligibility

The State can provide coverage to a portion of this population by allocating $532 million to create a state-funded Essential Plan for New Yorkers who are currently excluded because of their immigrant status. The Essential Plan covers people who earn up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The Community Service Society of New York estimates over 110,000 people could gain coverage in 2019 through such a program.

State Coverage for Threatened Immigrants.

The Trump Administration is ending Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for thousands of New Yorkers, many of whom have lived in New York for decades and made it their permanent home. They are similarly seeking to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program for young adults brought into the U.S. as children (aka “Dreamers”). Both efforts threaten access to Medicaid for low-income TPS and DACA residents. Both moves are being challenged in the federal courts. Whatever may eventually happen at the federal level, The State should continue to offer state-funded Medicaid to these residents by enacting A10607/S7569-A.

Affordable Coverage Options

New York State can make private coverage more affordable for moderate-income residents and ensure that there are robust public alternatives.

Essential Plan Buy-In

The Essential Plan is a popular health program that offers coverage for at most $20 a month with no deductible. People who earn too much for the Essential Plan must buy coverage on the state’s new health insurance marketplace which can cost $150 or more per month and have annual deductibles that are over $1,350 — even with financial assistance. New York could ease this affordability cliff by allowing people who earn between 200 and 250 percent of the federal poverty level (around $25,000-$30,000 for an individual) to choose between buying a private plan or buying into the Essential Plan.

The State also should explore establishing a premium assistance program of its own to augment the existing federal assistance for people with incomes over 200 percent of the federal poverty level who buy private insurance.

Making coverage more affordable would help address individual consumers’ budget challenges, but also bring down prices for the entire individual market by bringing more younger and healthier people into the risk pool.

Expanded explanations and more recommendations can be found in the document: Health Care for All New York 2019 Policy Agenda (available at www.hcfany.org