



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

## Senator O'Mara's weekly column 'From the Capitol' -- for the week of August 7, 2023 -- 'Marching orders toward an unsettling future'

THOMAS F. O'MARA August 7, 2023

| ISSUE: **MEDICAID SPENDING**



Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature.

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Senator O'Mara offers his weekly perspective on many of the key challenges and issues facing the Legislature, as well as on legislative actions, local initiatives, state programs and

policies, and more. Stop back every Monday for Senator O'Mara's latest column...

This week, "Marching orders toward an unsettling future"

The latest far-left marching orders from a New York State government under one-party control remain alarming, to say the least.

In last week's column, I provided an update on the state's worsening migrant crisis and the lack of accountability and transparency that continues to define the Hochul administration's response to it. It's a story that's coming to communities throughout this state.

"It's going to get worse before it gets better," New York City Mayor Eric Adams warned not long ago and, since then, we have seen the footage of migrants sleeping on the streets of New York because the city no longer has anywhere to house them. The consequences for all of us are many.

It's worth noting, then, recent reporting that again highlights the Hochul administration's expectation that the surge in asylum seekers flowing into New York will lead to even further spikes in Medicaid spending.

As if New York taxpayers aren't shouldering the costliest Medicaid burden in the nation already.

According to the state's own estimates, Medicaid spending, for the first time, will soar beyond \$100 billion in the current fiscal year. Those estimates pegged the annual cost of Medicaid in the coming year, which currently covers costs for eight million New Yorkers, at \$108 billion.

According to one prominent fiscal expert, the Empire Center for Public Policy, "The state's share [of Medicaid spending] is on track to be 53 percent higher in 2024 than it was in 2019, which compares to 10 percent growth in the five years before 2019." Keep in mind that the 2019-2024 period is the same five years that the Albany Democrats obtained one-party control.

It's explosive growth, to say the least, growth that continues to impose a heavy and unfair burden on taxpayers, particularly local property taxpayers. Governor Hochul already acknowledges that the ever-growing influx of migrants will likely make it even worse.

"Public health insurance coverage for asylum seekers and other migrants may drive further costs to the State," the governor's own executive spending plan warned earlier this year. That was before the crisis began spinning out of control. Now you can bet your last dollar that it's going to drive further costs.

Even before this migrant fiasco, Medicaid spending in this state had become unsustainable for taxpayers now and well into the future. Yet New York's all-Democrat, one-party, far-left leadership just goes on viewing Medicaid as the cure-all for what ails this state: Just keep having taxpayers foot the bill, even while the taxpayer well keeps running dry.

It is fiscal insanity. It's not sustainable. And the far-left marching orders don't stop there

It was also recently reported that Governor Hochul is in the process of launching a new, free, taxpayer-funded "sex worker health care pilot program" to provide prostitutes in New York with primary, sexual, and behavioral health care, and dental care. The Governor, by executive order, has already awarded \$1 million to get the program going. Of course, that's just for starters, and we all know it.

As one critic of this action noted, "Now (Governor Hochul) wants the taxpayers to fund health care for street prostitutes, the likely outcome of which will be to destroy the quality of life for New Yorkers. This policy will act like a magnet for more prostitutes and will undoubtedly attract a host of new deviants to work with them. And no one in his right mind believes this will be a 'pilot program' -- this is just the beginning. It doesn't get more irresponsible than this."

Critics further warn that it's a step toward the widespread decriminalization of prostitution. In fact, legislation has already been introduced in the Legislature that would make New York the first state in the nation to fully decriminalize prostitution statewide.

One thing that should be clear to all New Yorkers is this: One-party control of New York government is costly -- costly in terms of dollars and cents, for certain, but costly as well to the quality of our lives, public safety, and morality throughout this state.