



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

## Senator James Sanders Jr. and Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn Co-Host Successful MWBE Advocacy Day in Albany, Amplifying Calls for Program Expansion

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**Albany, NY** – Today, the annual Minority and Women Owned Business-Enterprise Advocacy Day, co-hosted by Senator James Sanders Jr. Chair of the Senate Majority Task Force and Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn, Chair of the MWBE Oversight Subcommittee, convened a coalition of business leaders, community organizations, and

elected officials gathered in **Albany on May 6** advocating to extend and expand the Article 15-A Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Program in the State of New York through impactful legislation.

Speaking at a press conference, legislators and stakeholders advanced measures to reform and expand the MWBE Program's goals of increasing contracting opportunities for businesses owned by minorities and women throughout New York State.

MWBE Advocacy Day amplified valuable stakeholder insights to increase contracting opportunities for businesses owned by minorities and women by further leveraging the MWBE Program as a critical tool for economic equity and leveling the playing field.

**Senator James Sanders** said, "As we convene for Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise Advocacy Day, it's imperative that we acknowledge the strides made by the MWBE Program while also recognizing the need for continued improvement and expansion. Our efforts today underscore the importance of ongoing legislative measures to ensure equitable contracting opportunities for all."

**Senator Cordell Cleare** said, "I have been a long-time fervent advocate for Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises. I celebrate our businesswomen each and every day. When our women and small businesses thrive, the whole community benefits. That is why I again expect to pass legislation this year to direct the Empire State Development Corporation to conduct a study on the feasibility of a MWBE capacity mentorship program to ensure that the next generation of entrepreneurs thrives."

New York City alone awarded \$6.3 billion in contracting opportunities to MWBEs through the program in FY 2023. The recently Enacted State Budget extended the Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) program until July 1, 2025.

**Senator Jeremy Cooney** said, “Supporting Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises means supporting groups that have been underinvested in for years. It’s about job creation and building generational wealth. As a member of the Select Majority Task Force, I’m proud to join my colleagues in calling for more resources, more opportunities, and greater equity as we uplift these businesses.”

"As Chair of the Women's Issues Committee in the New York State Senate, I am committed to advancing opportunities for women-owned businesses across New York, which has the highest MWBE utilization rate in the country," said **Senator Lea Webb**. “The extension of Article 15-A in the 2024-25 State Budget reaffirms our commitment to economic equity and the growth of historically disadvantaged businesses. I am dedicated to ensuring that businesses in the Southern Tier are fully engaged with and are benefiting from this transformative program. Together, we are setting a standard for diversity, inclusion, and success in our state's vibrant business community."

**Senator Leroy Comrie** said, “I am proud to serve as a representative in a state that leads the nation in MWBE contracting and procurement. My colleagues and I have worked hard to reach this level of progress, because we know how much there is to gain when historically disadvantaged enterprises are provided opportunities to thrive and grow. I thank my colleagues, Senator James Sanders Jr. and Assembly-Member Rodneyse Bichotte-Hermelyn, for their relentless advocacy as the respective Chairs of the MWBE Oversight Committees.”

**Senator Monica R. Martinez** said, “Since its creation in 1988, the New York Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) program has created new economic opportunities for traditionally underrepresented members of our state. While this program has helped transform the definition of entrepreneurial leadership, its work is not complete. I join with supporters here on MWBE Advocacy Day to call for the program's extension and expansion, ensuring continued opportunity for all New Yorkers.”

**Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn** said, “During this Day of Advocacy, we are taking action to break the disproportionate barriers faced by MWBEs in obtaining their fair share of the multi-billion dollar economic pie of New York City and State contracting opportunities. We are here to champion a bold legislative agenda that ensures we are continuously breaking the barriers to reach the economic success and even playing field our community deserves.”

“Supporting the growth and success of the Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Program, and ensuring its integrity, has been a longstanding priority of mine,” **commented Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes.** “MWBE contracts represent a form of restorative justice for New York State MWBE certified small businesses. I am proud to stand with Chairwoman Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn, and my other colleagues, on this MWBE Advocacy Day as we continue to promote and push for meaningful MWBE participation on public contracts.”

"An extension and expansion of Article 15A is necessary to keep doing the work of creating space and opportunity for minority and women business owners across the state," said **Assemblymember Amanda Septimo.** “Streamlining processes, including MWBE reciprocity between the city and the state, and making business services more accessible, is essential to improving the health of New York’s small business environment. We must ensure that growth in our communities also means growth by our communities."

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