



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Kevin Thomas

## Community Update - April 7, 2020

SENATOR KEVIN THOMAS April 7, 2020

| ISSUE: **2020-2021 NEW YORK STATE BUDGET**

### **April 7, 2020 Community Update Letter**

Dear Neighbor,

I hope you and your family are well. I know that these are difficult and uncertain times for all of us, but we are a strong community, and we will pull through together.

As you may have heard in Governor Cuomo's announcement this morning, we are seeing new data that suggests our social distancing efforts are working. It is critical that we keep up these efforts to continue to flatten the curve and protect our family, friends, and neighbors. With the holidays coming up, it is especially important to maintain social distancing, unnecessary trips out of the home, and stay home. If you see a business, location, or gathering violating state rules, you can file a complaint to the New York State PAUSE Enforcement Assistance Task Force by calling 1-833-789-0470 or online at <https://mylicense.custhelp.com/app/ask>.

I invite you to continue visiting my Community Resource Page at [nysenate.gov/coronavirusresources](https://nysenate.gov/coronavirusresources) for regular updates and information, and if you need any assistance, please reach out to my Office by emailing [thomas@nysenate.gov](mailto:thomas@nysenate.gov) or by calling 516-739-1700. I also want to thank our essential workers, who are keeping us up and running

during these difficult times. If you know an essential worker who deserves a special shout-out, let us know so that we can feature them on our Long Island Front Line Heroes page! Nominate a hero by going to <https://www.nysenate.gov/webforms/nominate-front-line-hero>

In addition to what's going on here at home, I want to make sure you and your family are informed of the efforts happening at the state level to provide critical funding for our schools, resources for our hospitals, and economic relief for Long Islanders. Last week, my colleagues and I worked under emergency conditions to pass a state budget that will help our community combat this public health crisis, maintain stability, and move forward. While this was not the budget we envisioned months ago, we did what needed to be done to protect and provide for New Yorkers in these unprecedented times. My top priority going into these negotiations was, and always will be, to ensure that Long Island gets a fair share. I believe that the budget we passed delivers on some of our community's most important priorities, including:

- **Preserving Funding for Our Schools.** Education funding is crucial, especially during these challenging times. My Senate colleagues and I were determined to prevent cuts to Foundation Aid and provide schools with the fiscal certainty they need to adopt their yearly budgets in May. I fought to hold the line on school funding, just as I fought to secure record education aid to Nassau County last year, so that our children can continue to have access to a world-class education. We have also worked closely with our federal representatives to secure \$1 billion in Education Relief Funding. I remain committed to fighting for every dollar of aid that our teachers, students, and schools need and deserve.
- **Providing Relief for Workers.** Our District has been hit particularly hard by massive job losses resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. I fought to secure an additional \$1 billion in unemployment funds so that hardworking Long Islanders don't have to worry about

putting food on their family's table during these difficult times. My colleagues and I also secured \$200 million in childcare funding to ensure that the children of essential workers are taken care of while their parents keep our state running. This budget also enacts the strongest Paid Sick Leave program in the nation at a time when New Yorkers need it the most.

- **Changes to Bail Reform Laws.** In order to make our communities safer, I successfully advocated for a number of crucial changes to last year's bail reform laws. Judges now have enhanced options upon which to condition release, including health referrals and requirements to attend counseling. The budget adds several more crimes to the list of offenses that are eligible for bail, including repeat offenses. Additionally, my colleagues and I helped secure a \$40 million Criminal Justice Discovery Compensation Fund to assist localities, local law enforcement, and prosecutors in carrying out criminal justice reforms. These changes will go a long way in addressing concerns with previous reforms, with the ultimate goal of creating a better, fairer criminal justice system.
- **Support for Our Hospitals and Health Care System.** My Senate colleagues and I fought hard against proposed Medicaid cuts during the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when healthcare facilities and staff are already stretched to the limits. In addition to preserving funding, I'll continue to be an advocate for our local hospitals and health care workers, so that they can have access to the resources and support they need and deserve.

As we continue to navigate the many challenges brought on by the COVID-19 health crisis, I want you to know that I will never stop fighting to ensure that your voice is heard in Albany. Your concerns, opinions, and viewpoints matter. I value every phone call, letter, email, and message that comes through my office. I also want you to know that my Office is here for you, especially during these difficult times. You can reach me any time at [thomas@nysenate.gov](mailto:thomas@nysenate.gov) or by calling 516-739-1700. Though my staff is working remotely, they are standing by and ready to assist you.

Please be safe, stay home, and stay strong. We will get through this together, and I am with you every step of the way.

Sincerely,

Senator Kevin Thomas