



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Alessandra Biaggi

SENATOR BIAGGI AND ASSEMBLY MEMBER HEVESI INTRODUCE LEGISLATION EXPANDING INTERNET ACCESS TO NEW YORKERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

ALESSANDRA BIAGGI February 4, 2021

ALBANY, NY – New York State Senator Alessandra Biaggi and Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi have introduced bill [S3593/A3912](#) to require local social services districts to provide internet access to all individuals receiving temporary housing assistance. The bill provides that one hundred percent of the cost for the expense incurred by local social services districts to provide internet access will be reimbursed by the state.

According to the New York City Department of Social Services, [most of the 450 homeless shelters](#) in New York City do not provide wifi for residents. In a [2020 survey](#) of shelter residents by the City Bar Justice Association, most residents reported that they were either unable to access the internet regularly or had to spend their limited resources on phone plans with data. [New York City Mayor de Blasio](#) recently announced that the City plans to install wifi in city-run homeless shelters, beginning with 200 family shelters following reporting about children in homeless shelters being unable to access remote learning.

“Access to the internet is a necessity in the modern world — and should be treated as a basic right guaranteed for all New Yorkers. For individuals experiencing homelessness, internet access has the potential to unlock critical resources and economic opportunities to survive

and thrive. In the era of COVID-19, it is a prerequisite for students to participate in school. By requiring temporary housing facilities in New York State to provide internet access for residents, we can make those opportunities a reality and fulfill a basic need for our fellow New Yorkers. I look forward to working with Assembly Member Andrew Hevesi to move this bill through the Legislature as quickly as possible,” said **State Senator Alessandra Biaggi (D-Bronx/Westchester)**.

“Every New Yorker deserves access to the internet, the reliance on virtual and remote activity spurred by the pandemic has made that all the more clear. Requiring internet access in temporary housing will ensure that struggling New Yorkers have the same resources as everyone else, students living in shelter can attend virtual school, and bring equity to an incredibly unbalanced society. I’m grateful to Senator Biaggi for introducing this critical legislation and look forward to moving it through the legislature and having the Governor sign it into law,” said **Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi (D-Queens)**.

“We applaud the sponsors of bill [S3593/A3912](#) for addressing this important issue. It aligns with South Bronx Rising Together's mission to ensure Bronx families have internet access, which has become a necessity and a lifeline during the pandemic—connecting families to work, health care, social services, food support, and many other fundamental aspects of daily life,” said **Christina Samuels, Director, South Bronx Rising Together**.

“Nearly a year into the pandemic, it is unconscionable that thousands of young learners are still in shelters or other temporary housing without internet access, and therefore have little or no access to the classroom. Internet access is essential to allow people to search for housing and jobs, connect to remote learning, and fully participate in our increasingly digital society. We applaud Senator Biaggi and Assemblymember Hevesi for advancing this crucial legislation, and we implore government at all levels to rectify this crisis immediately: It should have been solved ten months ago when we first raised the alarm,” said **Shelly Nortz**,

Deputy Executive Director for Policy, Coalition for the Homeless.

“The ability to access the internet can be the difference between securing employment or remaining unemployed, getting a new prescription when you need one or remaining ill. It is the way many people stay connected to children and loved ones, attend school, and navigate resources. This is no different for people experiencing homelessness. By requiring New York State to ensure people in temporary housing facilities have access to internet, Senator Biaggi and Assemblyman Hevesi are taking an important step toward closing the digital divide. This bill recognizes that the needs of those experiencing homelessness are no different from every other New Yorker. This bill will give them a vital tool to not only stay connected but thrive,” said **Jamie Powlovich, Executive Director, Coalition for Homeless Youth.**

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RELATED LEGISLATION

2021-S3593

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly

- On Floor Calendar Senate

- ◦ Passed Assembly

- Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Provides internet access to all individuals residing in temporary housing

January 30, 2021

In Senate Committee [Social Services](#)

Sponsored by [Alessandra Biaggi](#)

Do you support this bill?