



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Alessandra Biaggi

## SENATORS BIAGGI AND KRUEGER TO LEAD PUBLIC HEARING ON NEW YORK STATE'S ETHICS OVERSIGHT AND ENFORCEMENT

ALESSANDRA BIAGGI August 25, 2021

(Albany, NY) Today the Senate Ethics and Internal Governance Committee Chairwoman, Senator Alessandra Biaggi, and sponsor Senator Liz Krueger are leading a public hearing on New York State's system of ethics oversight and enforcement. The purpose of this hearing is to examine New York State's system, identify areas of improvement, and discuss alternative approaches to enforcing ethics within our state government.

The hearing will be held in-person in Van Buren Hearing Room A, NYS Legislative Office Building, Albany NY on Wednesday, August 25th, 2021 at 10:00 AM. Senators participating will be in person. Invited speakers have the ability to participate in the hearing virtually via Zoom. The hearing may be watched live on the [Senate website](#).

**Senator Alessandra Biaggi, Chair of the Senate Ethics and Internal Governance Committee**, said, "There has never been a more urgent time to reform New York's system of ethics, and I am grateful to hold today's hearing just one day into Governor Kathy Hochul's administration. This is the start of a new chapter in Albany and we have an opportunity to set the tone to ensure restoring integrity in our government is a top priority. Today's public ethics hearing is an opportunity to examine the extensive flaws within our system of ethics and oversight,

and identify necessary solutions. I want to thank Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Senator Krueger for prioritizing and their continued commitment to bringing good governance and transparency to Albany.”

**Senator Liz Krueger** said, "The first decades of the 21st century have seen a sorry stream of New York governors, attorney generals, comptrollers, and legislative leaders leaving office in disgrace, often facing criminal charges. If we want this cycle to stop we must fix our ethics laws, strengthen our oversight institutions, and raise our standards for elected officials. We in elected office must never be allowed to be above the law."

**Susan Lerner of Common Cause** said, "Common Cause/NY commends Senator Biaggi for convening this timely, and critical, public hearing on ethics reform. It is time for a major cultural shift ushering in a new era of ethics oversight in Albany. JCOPE can no longer be reformed, it must be torn down and replaced with something entirely new that instills confidence in New Yorkers. Oversight must be truly independent. We hope to see an ongoing public conversation — and much needed change — on ethics reform in New York."

**Rachael Fauss of Reinvent Albany** said, "We thank Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Senator Alessandra Biaggi for holding this timely and important hearing on ethics oversight and what policy changes are needed to address our state's serious and ongoing corruption problem. Corruption and abuse of power are not victimless crimes. Corruption hurts vulnerable New Yorkers the most. When state funds are awarded and laws passed because of pay-to-play and conflicts of interest, the richest and most powerful are rewarded, not the neediest or most deserving."

**Evan Davis of the Committee to Reform the State Constitution** said, "The fish stinks from the head. Many cases of corruption and abuse of power by high ranking New York officials show the truth of this adage. Ethics enforcement must be sufficiently independent to hold those

at the top accountable. Otherwise fraud, waste, abuse, cronyism, and 'what's in it for me' politics will rule the day, the public be damned."

**Betsy Gotbaum of Citizens Union** said, "New Yorkers are tired of reading about scandal after scandal in Albany. JCOPE has failed to rein in ethical misconduct, and both the public and state employees have completely lost faith in the agency. It must be replaced with a new agency, whose commissioners and staff are free from political interference. It's time for the Legislature and our new Governor to make ethics reform a priority. We applaud Senator Biaggi for starting the dialogue with this important hearing."

**Erica Vladimer of the Sexual Harassment Working Group** said, "Ethics oversight and accountability in New York State government happens the same way power abuse does: in back rooms, shrouded in secrecy, weighed and traded like any other political deal to be made. The Sexual Harassment Working Group knows that meaningful change begins with public conversation, and this one is long overdue. Today's hearing sets a new tone as we move forward, shedding even more light on a system designed by power abusers to protect power abusers. We're grateful to Senator Biaggi for making space to begin these public discussions, and we look forward to continuing them in our fight for a harassment-free Albany."

**Blair Horner of the NY Public Interest Research Group** said, "New York faces an ethics crisis, one that has been an ongoing embarrassment. We applaud the Senate for holding this hearing as an important first step toward establishing an ethics enforcement system that is a model for the nation."

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