



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Anna M. Kaplan

## Governor Hochul Signs Two Pieces of Legislation Boosting Transparency in State and Local Government

ANNA M. KAPLAN October 19, 2021

| ISSUE: **GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY, IMPROVING GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY, OPEN MEETINGS LAW, TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY, GOOD GOVERNMENT**



Governor Kathy Hochul today signed two pieces of legislation boosting transparency in state and local government. The first piece of legislation requires documents that are going to be discussed at open meetings to be made available on request or posted on the government's website at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. The second piece of legislation requires the MTA to publish its data in formats that are easily accessible and can be easily downloaded

and used by the public.

"There's no excuse for keeping New Yorkers in the dark on the actions governments take to help their constituents, and we've been committed to greater transparency since Day One," **Governor Hochul said.** "These pieces of legislation will require important local government documents and MTA data to be properly available for constituents to read and utilize. New Yorkers should be informed about the work government does for them every day, but we have to make it easier for them to get that information."

### **Making Documents Available Prior to Open Meetings (S.1150-A/A.1228-A)**

This legislation makes documents to be discussed at open meetings available to the public at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. The Open Meetings Law is intended to empower the public through the accessibility of meetings of public bodies. The law requires them to make available to the public relevant documents, such as any proposed rule, regulation, or resolution. However, the current law only requires documents to be made available prior to meetings "as determined by the agency or department." This standard has resulted in some government bodies failing to make materials available in advance of meetings, reducing transparency. This legislation requires any proposed resolution, law, rule, regulation, policy, or amendment to be made available upon request and to be posted to the body's website at least 24 hours in advance of their discussion at an open meeting, giving the public access to these important documents in advance.

**Senator Anna M. Kaplan said,** "Public participation in open meetings is a cornerstone of our democracy and a vital opportunity for citizens to have their concerns heard and addressed by their representatives. In order for the public to have an opportunity for meaningful participation in the process, they need to have access to discussion materials in advance of any meeting, but unfortunately too many public bodies in New York State are using a

weakness in our current law to skirt this important requirement. It's time that every public body across the state adopt this common-sense practice, and with this simple legislation, we will ensure that they do. I'm grateful for my partnership with Assemblywoman Amy Paulin on this important good-government measure and others, and I'm thankful for Governor Kathy Hochul's leadership in fighting to for a more transparent and open State Government."

**Requiring the MTA to Publish Data in Easily Accessible Formats (S.4625-A/A.1442-B)**

This legislation requires the MTA to publish its data in open data formats, which can be easily accessed, downloaded and manipulated by the public. The MTA will have to designate a data coordinator and will have 180 days to publish as much of its data as is feasible and legal within three years. This bill codifies Executive Order No. 95 of 2013, "Using Technology to Promote Transparency, Improve Government Performance and Enhance Citizen Engagement", into law.

**Senator Leroy Comrie said,** "The largest public authority in our state, responsible for thousands of jobs, billions of dollars in capital investment, and a key contributor to our economy has to be reliable and accountable. The MTA Open Data Act is a step in the right direction to providing a more easily digestible way to review the MTA's finances, contracts, and overall performance. Transparency is the prescription needed to bridge the trust gap between the MTA and the riding public. I would like to thank transportation advocates and my colleagues for their strong support for this legislation and commend Governor Hochul for signing it into law."

**Assemblymember Robert Carroll said,** "I commend Governor Hochul for signing the MTA open data act. With today's signing, the MTA will now have to make its data available to the public and easy to manipulate. The MTA OpenData Act, will make the MTA more transparent and accountable to the millions of New Yorkers who rely on subways, buses and commuter train

to go about their daily lives."

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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## 2021-S1150A

FOIL, Open Meetings Law, open meetings

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- 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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[Relates to making certain documents available for open meetings](#)

January 07, 2021

Senate Floor Calendar

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Do you support this bill?

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## 2021-S4625A

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- 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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Enacts the metropolitan transportation authority open data act

February 08, 2021

Senate Floor Calendar

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## 2021-A1228A

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- 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
- 

Relates to making certain documents available for open meetings

January 07, 2021

Signed by Governor

Do you support this bill?